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NEWS BRIEFS

Oscar winner found shot dead

LOS ANGELES, Feb 26: Oscar-winning Cambodian actor Haing Ngor was found shot dead Sunday outside his home in downtown Los Angeles, police said today. Haing Ngor, 45, won the Oscar for best supporting actor for the 1994 film 'The Killing Fields' in which he portrayed a local assistant to a US reporter in Cambodia during the bloody rule of the Khmer Rouge, reports AFP.

Student slaughtered

SIRAJGANJ, Feb 26: A student of the Sirajganj University College was slaughtered by miscreants at a village in Rajganj thana of the district early today. Police said a group of two or three miscreants called Abu Taber, 18, a third-year student and only son of Qudrat Ali Bepari of the village Hatpangasha, out of his residence at about 4 am killed him, reports UNB.

Student succumbs to injuries

From Staff Correspondent
 SYLHET, Feb 26: A student of the Madan Mohan College succumbed to his injuries early today. He breathed his last while being rushed to Dhaka for treatment. Murad Ahmed Chowdhury (Shipar) 20 sustained serious injuries when he was attacked by a group of armed youngmen in Khashobbar area of Sylhet town yesterday afternoon. They hit him with sharp weapons.

Seven policemen killed in Assam

NEW DELHI, Feb 26: Separatist guerrillas blew up a jeep and killed seven policemen in a remote northeastern Indian state on Monday, a news agency reported. The attack occurred in Kokrajhar district of Assam state where rebels of the Bodo tribe are fighting for a separate state for tribes people, United News of India said, reports AP.

Police firing in Tongi, clashes in Sherpur 3 killed during non-cooperation

By Staff Correspondent
 One person died in police firing in Tongi and two others were killed in clashes between Awami League and BNP activists in Sherpur yesterday, the third day of the Opposition-called non-cooperation programme.

The district administration yesterday imposed Section 144 in Sherpur town where the Opposition had earlier called a hartal for the day protesting arrest of Opposition leaders.

Normal life remained paralysed and rail-road communications virtually snapped for the third day yesterday as the mainstream Opposition stepped up its agitations for cancellation of the February 15 polls and fresh elections under a caretaker government.

At Tongi, hours-long clashes between police and Opposition activists left Baku Saha, a betel-leaf vendor killed in police firing and at least 10 others injured, six with bullet. Three policemen were also injured in bomb blast by the Opposition activists.

The body of Baku Saha was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy when three of the bullet-hit persons — Bilal Hossain (32), Shaheen Bhuiyan (35) and Abu Taber (28) — were admitted.

Baku Saha was the son of one Nikhil Chandra Shah of Pubal under Gazipur Sadar thana. Awami League leader in Tongi claimed that Baku Shah was an activist of Jubo League.

Clashes in Tongi began around nine in the morning when Opposition activists tried to set on fire an empty rail wagon and three point-operating machines (POMs) at the outer signal of the Tongi Junction and damaged engine of another train.

The fighting continued till 1 pm. Station Master of Tongi station Ahinadullah told this correspondent that pickets who put up barricades on rail tracks, destroyed nine out of 11 POMs yesterday and the day before and also took away the rest two resulting in total halt of movement of train through the station.

One POM costs take seven lakh, said Ahmadullah. Only two intercity trains — Noakhali-bound Upakul Express and Sylhet-bound Parabat Express could cross through the Tongi Junction before the violence flared up at 9 am, he added.

The agitators stopped the Ekota Express in the morning and damaged the engine. Soon, the train was brought back to Cantonment station.

Awami League activists held a protest rally at Tongi Bazar in the afternoon. Police, backed by para-military BDR, guarded the Tongi Junction the whole day yesterday.

Opposition activists continued stray processions and rallies till evening at Tongi Bazar, and on both sides of the outer signal of the station.

Assistant Superintendent of Police of Tongi Circle Md Harun told this correspondent that one platoon of BDR and two platoons of police were deployed to avert fresh outburst of violence.

At Sherpur, the clash first started at 10 am. Police and BDR opened counter-fire to bring the situation under control.

The Opposition activists later left the port area. A tense situation was prevailing in the entire port area, witnesses and port sources said.

Stabbed to death

From Staff Correspondent
 CHITTAGONG, Feb 26: A young man was stabbed to death by some unidentified miscreants at Enayet Bazar in the city this evening.

The victim was identified as Salahuddin Rubel, 25. He was killed following a conflict in the area according to the police sources. Details could not be known.

war Kamal came under bomb attack at around 10 am at the port area while his driver Ruhul Amin sustained injuries.

Another police personnel Abu Yusuf received bomb injuries in Laldighi Maidan area during a clash with Opposition activists. They were admitted into police hospital. Besides, others were admitted into port hospital, Medical College Hospital and private clinics.



Police firing at pickets at Tongi yesterday.

— Star photo



Police taking the body of Baku Saha killed in police firing at Tongi yesterday.

— Star photo

3 leaders sent to dist jails

By Staff Correspondent
 Three of the four opposition leaders jailed under a 30-day detention order were transferred yesterday to different district jails, according to Opposition sources.

Awami League Organising Secretary Mohammad Nasim was moved to Noakhali district jail at around 9 pm from the Dhaka Central Jail, the Opposition sources said.

Jatiya Party Secretary General Anwar Hossain Manju was shifted to Kushtia jail at around 8 pm and JP president member Moudud Ahmed was sent to Jessore jail, they said.

Manju, Nasim and Moudud were arrested in separate police drives late Saturday night under the Special Powers Act and immediately sent to the

Fire in FM's office room

By Staff Correspondent
 A fire broke out in the office room of the Foreign Minister early yesterday morning.

Foreign Ministry sources said, no document was damaged in the fire which was promptly put out by fire brigade.

The fire sparked from an electricity line connected with the air conditioner in the room at around 6.45 am.

The fire brigade rushed there and put out the fire before the blaze could spread further.

Opposition extends programme upto 2pm Wednesday

By Staff Correspondent
 The mainstream Opposition yesterday extended its three-day 'non-cooperation' programme upto 2pm Wednesday in protest against alleged repression on opposition political workers, arrest of top leaders and killings during the programme.

The decision was taken by the liaison committee of Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami.

The 'non-cooperation' programme which started at 6 am Saturday, was earlier scheduled to end yesterday evening.

The three parties would announce a fresh programme after February 29, Opposition leaders said.

The leaders, however, added that their new programme would take into account the period between March 2 and March 6 to allow the devotees to participate in the Biswa Jityema at Tongi.

Awami League said that it would provide legal and moral support to any official who is penalised for taking part in the 'non-cooperation' programme.

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina in a statement said that there was no alternative but to force the government to resign in order to wrest back the democratic rights of the people.

BNP call to resist 'anarchy'

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and its front organisations have called upon the people to unitedly resist the 'subversive programmes' of Opposition parties, reports BSS.

BNP leaders and workers, who brought out a procession in the city against 'anarchy and destructive policy' of the Opposition, congratulated the people, officials and employees, for foiling the Opposition's

Does anybody care about public opinion

By Mahfuz Anam
 In their attempt to hurt the government, opposition parties seem to have embarked on a reckless and self-destructive policy of hurting the very people and the country whose welfare they profess to represent.

In total disregard of civic, economic, social, financial and emergency needs of the general public, opposition parties have extended, yesterday, their 'non-cooperation' programme (which is hartal by another name), for another 32 hours.

Whenever we put the question of hartals to the opposition parties, they say "What else can we do? This is our only democratic weapon". Partly out of sympathy to this point of view, general public do tolerate hartals and strikes to a reasonable extent.

This newspaper, which spoke out much more against hartals previously, did not do so lately because it also felt that opposition point of view had some merit. But now all limits of reason, of sympathy and of democratic norms have been crossed.

This country has been in virtual halt since 20th of this month. Slow down began even earlier, as we started preparing for the Eid holidays. Then we went into three days of work stoppage, which made

for one whole week, inclusive of Friday, 23rd. After seven days of our nation being totally cut off from all economic activities, for the opposition to extend it for another 32 hours is an act that is against all aspects of our national interest.

Not only that this extended strike will hurt the country, it will also hurt the opposition and hurt it bad. There is absolutely no question that the ruling party lost a lot of credibility and public support by first holding the virtual one party election, and then rigging it so badly and blatantly.

There was a significant swing of public opinion in favour of the opposition immediately after the disgraceful elections.

This public support, the opposition now stands to lose by its total and incomprehensible disregard for public needs and concerns. What the BNP had lost after the elections, the opposition is now handing them back in a platter.

The arrest of the political leaders has added to the discredit of the government. The so-called 'get tough' policy has been condemned by this newspaper and many others. It is our view that this policy has not gone down very well with

Polls in remaining centres by Mar 14

By Staff Correspondent
 The Election Commission (EC) has sent instructions to the returning officers to hold elections by March 14 in all the centres where polling could not be held on February 15, according to EC sources.

Under the EC directive, elections to 10 parliamentary constituencies and repolling in many centres of 74 constituencies are to be held according to the convenience of the returning officers of the respective areas, the sources said.

Election Commissioner Justice Abdul Jalil, while talking to The Daily Star yesterday, said: "Adjourned elections to 10 constituencies and repolling in the centres of 74 constituencies will be held soon." The EC is taking necessary preparation in that regard, he added.

Asked about the delay in declaring the number of constituencies where the elections have been adjourned, he said, "Declaration is not necessary... we have made announcements at the local level."

20 more hurt as N'ganj Abu Dal continues clash

From Our Correspondent
 NARAYANGANJ, Feb 26: At least 20 more persons were injured in gun battle between two groups of the local Jatiyatatabadi Jobadal in Talla area of the town today.

It was the second gunfight in two days.

Of the injured 6 received bullet shots and two of them were referred to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital in critical condition. They are Zahid Hossen, 22, and a hawker. The other injured include Raju, 20, Abdus Samad, 60, Shahidullah, 25, and Emran, 20.

More than a hundred shots were exchanged and about 400 cocktails exploded during the clash which continued for about an hour and a half in the morning.

Hartal observed in Pirojpur

PIROJPUR, Feb 26: A half-day hartal, called by the mainstream opposition parties, was observed in the town today, reports UNB.

Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami enforced the hartal in protest of the arrest of four central opposition leaders.

Witnesses said the opposition activists ransacked the district BNP office in the town during the hartal hours. Police later arrested three JP activists in this connection.

India-Aussie clash today



Sports Reporter
 to look as formidable as their spectacular batting line-up. The fielding was meant to be the side's major weakness but Mohammed Azharuddin taking over the coaching seems to have paid off.

Australia's balance has been threatened by the loss of pace bowler Craig McDermott through injury but batting, bowling and fielding all functioned well in the team's opener against Kenya.

India will be hoping for a major innings from Mohammed Azharuddin.

52 shops gutted at Mirpur

By Staff Correspondent
 A fire at a 'kutcha' bazar in Mirpur Sector-6 early hours of Monday damaged at least 200 makeshift stalls of which 52 were completely gutted, according to Fire Service sources.

The devastating fire broke out around 1:22 am on Monday. It was brought under control in about one hour 15 minutes by nine units of the Fire Brigade, which arrived on the scene from different parts of the city.

Meanwhile, at least 7 shops were partially damaged in another fire in the city's Kathalbagian area yesterday.

The fire at 21 Free School Street in the city, started around 3:00 am on Monday. It was brought under control within an hour and a half by the fire brigade. The extent of damage could not be known immediately.

Hawala scandal: Row disrupts parliament

NEW DELHI, Feb 26: The Indian parliament adjourned today over a straggling bribery scandal, as the opposition stumped the ruling party with a new strategy to oust Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao's government before general polls, reports AFP.

Business collapsed in parliament after lower house Speaker Shivraj Patil adjourned transactions and refused to reply to questions from opposition MPs on the bribery scandal which has scalded almost all political parties.

The opposition disrupted proceedings on the budget session's opening day when Patil said he was accepting the resignation of the leader of the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People's Party, BJP), Lal Krishna Advani.

Richardson hopeful of dialogue

By Staff Correspondent
 US Congressman Bill Richardson yesterday expressed the hope that his meetings with the leaders of the ruling and opposition parties would yield positive results by way of their entering into a dialogue without any pre-conditions.

"I am hopeful that a dialogue will take place as a result of my meetings," he said last night in reply to questions from reporters about the outcome of his talks with Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina.

The US Congressman, who is a close friend of President Clinton, said: "I hope that leaders from the government and the opposition parties will re-dedicate themselves to the goal of talking to each other directly in an open and constructive way to search for a solution that is democratic, civilian and non-violent."

"It is dialogue, dialogue and dialogue, not confrontation," he reiterated reading out from a prepared text before replying briefly to a few questions from journalists at the Zia International Airport last night at the end of his two day visit to Bangladesh.

"But it is upto those political leaders to take the initiative," he said.

Talks with Hasina very good

By Staff Correspondent
 US Congressman Bill Richardson yesterday called on Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina "in a bid to pursue the mainstream Opposition to take part in a fully contested polls."

During the one and a half hour-long meeting at Hasina's Dhanmondi residence, the Congressman exchanged views with her on many national and international issues in a cordial atmosphere, according to the party press release. It made no comment on the issues discussed.

When asked by the waiting press, the Congressman, however, described his meeting with the AL leaders as "very good" but declined to make further comment.

Later talking to The Daily Star, Awami League sources described the US Congressman "a patient listener" who has "clear ideas on the political realities of Bangladesh."

They said during the discussion the AL side briefed the US law-maker on the position of the party and the Opposition in general. The AL also described the Opposition's views on the latest political situation in the country, they said.

The sources said Richardson, who did not carry any specific formula or proposal, thought that it would be in the interest of democracy in Bangladesh to resolve the political crisis through dialogue between both the sides.

The AL leaders made it clear that they would not participate in any election unless the government is formed through a free and fair process.