

# A day of disruptions in Chittagong

By Morshed Ali Khan back from Chittagong

Panic and fear gripped the port city of Chittagong following the arrest of City Corporation Mayor Mohiuddin Chowdhury at around 3 pm on Wednesday.

Groups of people, with whatever they had, started rampaging the major streets and attacking various offices there immediately after the arrest of the mayor, witnesses said.

Buses and other transports passing through the city had to go for cover when mobs pounced on almost everything on their way after the news spread Wednesday that the mayor, who is also a leader of the Awami League, was arrested at around 3 pm. Within minutes after the arrest, the whole city wore a deserted look.

Police on duty at some strategic points of the city withdrew in such a haste that at one place near East Nasirabad they even left behind their stocks of rubber bullets and tear gas canisters.

As darkness fell, groups of unidentified youths armed with crackers, pistols, and other sharp weapons came out on the streets of the city devoid of security personnel.

The police and BDR remained off the streets as the city corporation personnel reportedly refused to turn on the street lights in protest against the arrest of the mayor.

The armed youths then started looting and setting fire to banks, offices and business houses at many places of the city.

At Gate No 2 of Sholoshahar, an armed group of about 20 allegedly set ablaze first a garments factory at the Sheikh Farid Market, reportedly belonging to the State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism.

As soon as the fire broke out, local people desperately tried to call the fire service and the police. The fire service reportedly said that they could not move out of their stations as the roads were heavily barricaded. The police telephone also remained

unanswered, it was alleged. After setting fire to the garments factory, the group then moved to the Bangladesh Biman office across the road at East Nasirabad, witnesses said.

The youths also fired shots in the air and exploded crackers in front of the recently constructed Biman office. The few guards inside the office ran as fast as they could, they said.

The group smashed their way into the building and started looting. Later they set the entire office afire. Within minutes, the office, building of the Rangis Ltd and its warehouse next to the Biman office came under attack. The youths broke the shutters of the Rangis office and started looting away television sets, video cassette recorders, fridges and office equipment, witnesses said.

The youths then poured petrol and set the office ablaze. Many new cars inside the showroom were burnt, they said.

At around 10 pm, nearly four hours after the fire incidents, one fire vehicle with about six fire fighters on board arrived at the garments factory.

Mobs also set fire and damaged a number of offices and banks including the City Bank and American Express, General Post Office, BRTC bus depot and the recently constructed Railway Station.

Rumours of the army being called out spread in the city quickly. At about 1 am on Thursday, armed police moved into the city in columns. A few vehicles of army personnel sped through the city, city residents said.

Throughout Thursday, pickets kept the city totally paralysed. Uncertainty loomed over the port city as street barricades blocked every outlet of the metropolis. Hundreds of men, women and children were seen walking towards Sitakunda from where, rumours said, buses were available for going to Dhaka.



The Awami League (L) and Jatiya Party (R) brought out separate mourning processions in the city yesterday for those killed during the recent 'non-cooperation' programme. Star photo

## Conservatives win polls in Australia

SYDNEY, Mar 2: The leader of Australia's conservative opposition, John Howard, taking government in a massive election win today, offered a vision of a united Australia and paid tribute to long time foe Paul Keating, reports Reuters.

Howard's opposition coalition of liberal and national parties ended 13 years of Labour rule with a landslide win giving them up to 40-seat majority in the 148 seat parliament as voters decided it was time for a change.

"I am very conscious of the enormous responsibility that has been placed upon me and upon my colleagues by the verdict of the Australian people today," Howard, 56, told hundreds of cheering supporters packing out a Sydney hotel ballroom.

"It will be my intention and my commitment now, I and my colleagues will now devote our all to delivering the maximum degree of unity and cohesion to the Australian people," he said.

## 81 killed in Ugandan boat capsizes

KAMPALA, Mar 2: Eighty-one people were killed when their overloaded passenger boat capsized on lake Victoria on Friday, bringing to 117 the number of people killed in accidents on the lake during the past week, police said today, reports AFP.

Police spokesman Eric Naigambi said the accident occurred during a storm between the islands of Masoyi and Bumba, some 150 kilometres east of Kampala. The boat was carrying a total of 87 passengers.

Naigambi blamed the accident on overloading of the usually unseaworthy boats. "Some of these crude boats can carry up to 120 people," he added.

Last weekend, 36 people died when their boat collided with a fishing boat on the lake. Naigambi said police planned to establish a marine patrol unit to prevent unseaworthy boats from being used to carry passengers.

## Ctg hartal ends

From Page 1 League leader Mohiuddin Chowdhury on Wednesday last. After the end of hartal at 6 pm today life slowly returned to normal. Vehicles began plying, shops and markets reopened and port functions resumed.

An indefinite hartal was called by the major opposition parties demanding the release of the CCG mayor. The hartal was later rescheduled till 6 pm today.

Hasina Mohiuddin, wife of the Mayor Mohiuddin, met him in the afternoon today at Comilla jail, family sources said. They added that preparations were underway to file a writ with the high court challenging his arrest.

Meanwhile, during hartal hours today sporadic clashes, gunshots and bomb blasts were reported from New Market, C & B Colony at Nasirabad, Lalkhan Bazar, Chowmohani, Agrabad, Chawkbazar and Chandgaon areas.

At the New Market area a chase and counter-chase between members of the law enforcing agencies and a mob took place at around 12 noon, witnesses said. Law enforcing agency personnel opened blank fire and lathi charge to disperse the mob, witnesses added. At least 10 people were injured in the clashes.

All types of vehicles, except a few rickshaws, stayed off the roads as pickets were very active at all the important points of the city during the hartal hours today. Businesses were closed and production remained suspended at the mills and factories.

Both public and private offices could not function and bank transactions were disrupted. All activities at Chittagong port also remained suspended during today's hartal, port sources said.

Fallies and processions were brought out by the opposition parties at various places of the city demanding release of Mayor Mohiuddin.

## 61 election tribunals constituted

The Election Commission (EC) through a gazette notification has announced the constitution of 61 election tribunals for trial and disposal of cases relating to the 8th Jatiya Sangsad polls throughout the country, reports BSS.

According to an EC press release issued last night, the district and sessions judges of the respective districts excepting Khagrachari, Rangamati and Bandarban will act as election tribunals.

The district and sessions judge of Chittagong will conduct the tribunals of Khagrachari and Rangamati hill districts while the district and sessions judge of Cox's Bazar will conduct the tribunal of Bandarban hill district.

The press release said petitions will have to be filed by

## Processions

From Page 1 killed during their campaign against the government since February 15.

Earlier, addressing a gathering before the AL procession started, party general secretary Zillur Rahman said that the February 15 elections had once again proved that no fair elections could be held under the BNP government.

The nation is now divided over the election issue. On one side, there are the people and on the other, only the BNP leaders," he said.

AL presidium member Abdus Samad Azad said that the elections had been rejected by the people of the country as well as by the international community.

He demanded immediate resignation of the BNP government and fresh polls under a neutral caretaker government within 90 days.

## US envoy to India predicts Congress will lose majority in polls

NEW DELHI, Mar 2: US ambassador to India Frank Wisner predicted today that Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao's Congress Party would lose its majority in coming general elections and fresh polls would have to be held before long, reports Reuters.

"No party is going to have an overall majority. You're going to be looking at a coalition government," Wisner told a business conference in the Indian capital.

"You're looking at the next elections before you know about it."

Wisner said India, which must hold elections by mid-year, was expected to go to the polls in May. Rao's government was expected to decide on the dates soon.

"Coalitions are cautious, particularly in India's case. They have short lives," Wisner said. "I think we may be looking at another general election before too many years down the road."

Congress has ruled India for all but about three years since independence in 1947. The party of former prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, his daughter Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv Gandhi, was last out of power between 1989 and 1991.

## A 'concrete' offer

From Page 1 The decision to send written proposal to the agitating opposition parties, particularly the Awami League, was taken to gain their confidence that the ruling party was sincere to fulfil the caretaker demand, party sources explained.

Meanwhile, hardliners in the ruling BNP made abortive bids till yesterday to prevent Begum Zia from directly accepting the caretaker idea. The ruling party was opposed to it until recently.

A meeting of the top BNP leaders with Begum Zia in the chair yesterday witnessed a debate on the caretaker concept. The idea was supported by most of the leaders. They suggested that the PM accept it in the greater interest of the nation and call upon the agitating Opposition for an understanding on the matter, meeting sources said.

As per the majority's will, added the sources, acceptance of the caretaker concept by the PM was finally incorporated in the scheduled address to the nation today.

At the meeting, held at the PM's Tejgaon office in the afternoon, the BNP top leaders also debated on the wordings in the PM's speech as regards the caretaker issue. The hardliners insisted that the PM should not announce her acceptance of the Opposition demand exactly in their (Opposition's) language — neutral non-party caretaker government. The agitating parties would claim this as their victory, they noted.

Instead, they suggested, the PM should call it a non-party interim government and constitutional provisions for this

governed by two unstable coalitions that quickly fell apart. The current government has been rocked by a corruption scandal and defeats in a series of state assembly elections.

Wisner said the next government would not reverse the economic reforms that Rao initiated in 1991, dismantling trade and tariff barriers and inviting private investment.

"India is going to grow and India is not going to turn back," he told the gathering of US investors. "You are here at an enormously exciting time. This is an economy that is awake, moving forward and an attractive place for you to be."

The envoy said India would need to continue liberalising its economy for a few years before it could join regional groups — ASEAN and APEC.

"India's connections to economic Asia are just beginning. I think it will end up being part of ASEAN and APEC but it will take a few years to get there," he said.

"To be a real player in the Asian mainstream, you've got to have a much more open economy than is the case at present in India," Wisner said.

## Repolling in Jhenidah-3, Feni-2 Mar 5, 6

JHENIDAH, Mar 2: Repolling will be held in 30 centres of Jhenidah-3 (Kotchandpur-Maheshpur) constituency on Tuesday, March 5, officials sources said today, reports UNB.

The polling was postponed in the centres on February 15 due to violent incidents including hijacking of ballot boxes.

BNP candidate Shahidul Islam was leading by getting 34,305 votes against two other candidates, out of total 1,97,443 votes.

Another report says: Repolling in 26 centres of Feni-2 (Sadar and Dagonbhuiyan) constituency will be held on Wednesday (March 6).

The Election Commission postponed the polling in eleven centres in Dagonbhuiyan and 15 in Sadar due to violence on the election day.

## Date for health check up of Ctg Hajj pilgrims

CHITTAGONG, Mar 2: The date for health check up of the intending Hajj pilgrims of Chittagong district has been extended till March 4, an official handout said tonight, reports BSS.

Those pilgrims who could not be appeared before the district medical board at the Chittagong Medical College Hospital have been requested to be present before the board for health check up, the handout added.

## 2000 vehicles

From Page 1 cause of the traffic jam. BIWTC sources said six to six-and-a-half feet deep water was flowing in the channel-4, and due to that, ferries were carrying less than normal loads.

A BIWTA official on the other hand, told UNB that according to a record today the channel's depth of water was seven-and-a-half feet. "So, all ferries could cross the river normally."

Some truck drivers said the goods they are carrying, including perishable items like vegetables, fruit and onion, were now rotting owing to the ferry problem for the last three days.

They fear that the ferry system may collapse anytime as desperate truckers began to float serial system for vehicles. At least 300 trucks were reported awaiting ferries at the ghats.

'Moudud still being denied, division in jail' By Staff Correspondent

Moudud Ahmed is still being denied of division at the Jessore jail, complained his wife Hasna Moudud yesterday after visiting him recently.

Moudud Ahmed, arrested under the Special Powers Act, was suffering from pain in his chest and ears, she said.

Hasna Moudud further alleged that the jail authorities did not do the 'service return', sent by the court through a special messenger on Thursday.

The High Court division on Thursday issued rule on the government to show cause as to why the detention of Moudud Ahmed along with the other political prisoners should not be declared illegal.

Hearing for the rule subject to 'service return' within four days from Thursday was fixed on March 7.

## Bomb attack on Kishoreganj EC office

KISHOREGANJ, Mar 2: Anti-election activists attacked the election office at Kharampatti in the town tonight and damaged some window-panes, reports UNB.

The attackers, numbering 60 to 70, came to the election office at about 10:15 pm and hurled home-made bombs. Police rushed to the spot after the incident.

Awami League brought out a procession in the town this evening protesting the announcement of repolling at 247 centres in six constituencies in the district on March 7.

## The Midnight File

### Serbs may sever ties again with NATO peacekeepers

SARAJEVO, Mar 2: The Bosnian Serbs have hinted they might sever ties again with NATO peacekeepers in Bosnia, a spokesman for the Peace Implementation Force (IFOR) said today, reports AFP.

### 3-day hartal called

## Opposition to resist repolling in Sirajganj

SIRAJGANJ, Mar 2: The three main opposition parties have called for a three-day dawn-to-dusk hartal in six thanas of the district on March 6, 9 and 12 to resist the repolling in five parliamentary constituencies, reports UNB.

This was announced by the district unit of the Haison committee of Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami following directives from the central body of the three parties, said a press release.

The parties called for the hartals immediately after the Election Commission (EC) announced repolling to be held on March 6 in the Sirajganj-3 (Raiganj-Tarash) constituency, on March 9 in Sirajganj-4 (Ullapara), and March 12 in Sirajganj-5 (Belkuchi-Kamarbandh) and Sirajganj-6 (Chowhali and four unions of Shahjadpur thana).

However, the EC is yet to announce the repolling date for Sirajganj-1 (Kazipur) where voting could not take place in all the 82 centres.

Election in the five parliamentary seats could not be held on February 15 due to widespread violence following resistance by the activists of the opposition parties which boycotted the polls demanding voting under a neutral caretaker government.

Meanwhile, Kazipur thana Awami League general secretary Ismail Hossain, in a

## Arrest order against Dr Nilima Ibrahim

Police filed a case against Dr Nilima Ibrahim, wife of Kazi Shahed Ahmed, for publishing a seditious article, written by Dr Nilima Ibrahim which was published in the daily Ajker Kagoj in its February 26 issue, reports UNB.

The court issued warrants of arrest against them, but none was arrested so far.

## Oath-taking

From Page 1 Before taking oath, each of the members concerned would have to make a handwritten declaration to the EC, the press release said. Otherwise, he will not be able to take oath, it added.

The mainstream opposition boycotted the February 15 polls and also accused the government of rigging and vote fraud.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission by a gazette notification on February 20 has announced the official results of 208 constituencies.

Barring two constituencies, all the seats were won by the candidates nominated by the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

When asked if there was any constitutional or legal bar for administering oath under a certain period of time, Shakh Razzak Ali said, "MPS-elect can be administered oath any time after the gazette notification, issuing a notice for that is no obligation."

Those who would not be able to take their oath on the announced dates would be administered oath on a later date, he added.

According to the Speaker, 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.

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 submits an application to the Speaker for extension of the time limit, the Speaker may extend it, Razzak Ali suggested.

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statement, demanded immediate release of Mohammad Nasim, the party's central organising secretary.

If Nasim is not released by March 6, Hossain warned of indefinite closure of Kazipur's road communication with the entire country.

UNB from Sherpur adds: Opposition parties declared 'people's curfew' to resist repolling on Tuesday in the district's three constituencies where election was foiled by violence on February 15, reports UNB.

## BNP grand rally

From Page 1 change of views with the people of respective areas.

The meeting urged the opposition parties to come forward and sit in a dialogue to resolve the current political crisis by shunning the path of destruction and conflict.

Dhaka city BNP president and Labour and Manpower Minister Mir Shawkat Ali, State Minister for Youth and Sports Sadek Hossain, State Minister for Children and Women Affairs Sarwari Rahman, State Minister for Cultural Affairs Jahanara Begum, BNP leaders Haris Chowdhury, Salahuddin Ahmed MP, Iskandar Ali, Shamsuzzaman Duda MP, Zahiruddin Swapan MP, Kazi Asaduzzaman, Kazi Abul Bashir and Begum Khawja Shamsunnahar Ahsanullah attended the meeting.

Present in the meeting were also JCD leaders Fazlul Huq Milon MP, Nazmuddin Alam MP, Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu, Giasuddin Chowdhury Khokon, Jassas leaders Abdul Hye Sikder, Emran Saleh Prichard, S M Ruhul Amin, Moazzam Hossain Khan, Foyezul Karim, Nazrul Islam, Rezaul Karim and Abu Taher Patwari.

Mannan Bhuiyan, who took up the reigns of the party owing to illness of the Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder, also held a separate meeting with Dhaka District BNP leaders at the party central office in the evening.

## Ctg port

From Page 1 The sources added that 13,000 containers were now lying at the port sheds which have the normal capacity to hold 8,500 containers.

During the Opposition's non-cooperation programme last week, three ministers, including the State Minister for Port and Shipping, made a determined effort to keep the port operations running. But their efforts failed in the face of resistance by the Opposition activists.

## Euro-Asian

From Page 1 cooperation between the regions, and in particular on ways to facilitate trade and investment.

Leaders agreed to pursue systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally with the ultimate goal of eliminating the weapons.

A government and private sector working group to meet in Thailand to draw up an Asia-Europe investment promotion action plan within six months aimed at improving two-way investment.

An Asia-Europe business forum to hold its inaugural meeting in France in 1995 and the next in Thailand.

An Asia-Europe foundation to be set up in Singapore with contributions from countries of both regions.

The next ASEM meeting to be held in two years in Britain and the third in South Korea in the year 2000.

## US ban on shrimps

From Page 1 Also unaffected are imports of shrimp raised by aquaculture — that is, on farms rather than in the wild.

Richard Gutting, vice president of the National Fisheries Institute, said the countries likely to be affected most are high-volume exporters China, India, Thailand and some other countries around the Pacific Rim.

Moreover, a number of countries previously certified, like Mexico, face new requirements for their trawlers operating in the Pacific, which are now covered by the law for the first time.

Less affected would be smaller suppliers in the European Union and Japan, but they are the ones using Malaysia, already threatening a WTO challenge, Gutting said.

The most damaging retaliation could come from Japan, which buys 60 per cent of all US seafood exports, he said.

The National Fisheries Institute, a US seafood-industry trade association, predicts an

## JCD-BCL clash in Narsingdi

NARSINGDI, Mar 2: At least six people were injured in a clash between rival student groups at the Hatridia Razuddin Degree College in the town today, witnesses said, reports UNB.

The clash between ruling BNP's student front Jatiyatadab Chhatra Dal (JCD) and pro-Awami League Chhatra League (BCL) erupted when the JCD brought out a militant procession on the college campus.

Injured BCL leaders Masudur Rahman Nilu, Riton, Nuruzzaman and Ataur Rahman and JCD leaders Mujibur and Asad were admitted to Sadar Hospital.

Witnesses said supporters of the two groups blasted at least 20 home-made bombs and used hockey sticks and tam dao during the hour-long clash.

After the clash, the BCL activists allegedly attacked the residence of Principal Tofoazz Hossain Shahjahan, who is also the general secretary of sadar thana BNP.

The Principal, the JCD and the BCL filed separate cases with Narsingdi thana.

## Biswa Ijtema

From Page 1 For the first time, the Ijtema is being held on lands donated by the government to the Tablig Jamaat of Bangladesh, which organises the congregation every year.

The Ijtema committee has taken adequate measures for supply of drinking water and for sanitation, electrification and public address system.

The massive pandal for the congregation, damaged by a nor-wester last week, was rebuilt by about 20,000 volunteers.

Some 3,000 tubewells and four shallow and two deep tubewells have been installed at the Ijtema venue for supply of drinking water.

Healthcare facilities will be available to the devotees. Two medical camps with two doctors and four ambulances have been set up for round-the-clock service free of cost. Besides, 12 beds of the Tongi Government Hospital have also been kept reserved for the devotees.

Army and Navy personnel have built several Bailey bridges on the Turag to facilitate movement of devotees.

C 1 sheet-covered camps have been built for the foreigners attending the congregation. Necessary steps have been taken for their security, police said.

Bangladesh Railway arranged special trains and BRTC arranged bus service for the devotees. All inter-city trains passing through Tongi will halt at the station till tomorrow. Biswa Ijtema was first held at Pagar, near Tongi, in 1966.

## BNP leader shot in city

By DMCH Correspondent A ward level BNP leader was shot while another person was stabbed in separate incidents in Mohammadpur in the city yesterday.

Faruq Hossain Babul, 40, joint secretary of the BNP unit of Ward No 42, sustained serious bullet wounds in his head and thigh when a gang fired on him in Adabar area early hours yesterday. He was later admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

The unidentified gang also stabbed Babul who was returning to his house in a motorbike at around 12:30 am, hospital sources added.

In another incident one Shahin, 22, received bullet injuries in his leg when a gang of armed men in an auto-rickshaw attacked him in Noorjahan Road, Mohammadpur at around 10:30 am yesterday.

Meanwhile, two persons identified as Abul Hashem, 60, and Anwar Hossain, 22, were injured in bomb blasts in separate incidents at Dholapara and Kalachandpur, Gulshan area in the city yesterday.

The injured persons were all under treatment at the DMCH.

## Young men go on rampage at Dental College

By Staff Correspondent A group of unidentified young men went on a rampage at the Dhaka Dental College yesterday morning, damaging some office and class rooms.

According to witnesses, the group damaged furniture and broke the window panes of several office and class rooms during the attack.

The trouble began at around 10:30 am yesterday when the newly appointed Principal was scheduled to take over.

A section of the students of the Dental College have been demonstrating for the removal of the principal for more than last six months. On the other hand, a section of the employees opposing the students demand, college sources said.

Later police brought the situation under control. A case was filed with Ramna thana. No one was arrested in this connection till last night, police said.

## 15 shops gutted in Barisal

From Staff Correspondent BARISAL, Mar 2: At least 15 shops were gutted in a devastating fire at Kalata Bandar under Bawphal thana in the early hours of today.

The fire which reportedly originated from an electric short-circuit, continued for about three hours mainly due to absence of any fire fighting units in the area.