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NEWS BRIEFS

Peace march

A peace march of professionals and intellectuals yesterday paraded the city streets seeking immediate resolution of the current political crisis. Teachers, journalists, physicians, engineers, lawyers, writers, agriculturists and cultural activists participated in the peace procession, also joined by a large number of commonman, reports UNB.

8 pilgrims killed in Pak bus mishap

ISLAMABAD, Mar 8: At least eight people were killed and 34 injured today when a bus carrying pilgrims plunged into a ditch near the southern city of Hyderabad, the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) reported. It said the pilgrims were returning from the shrine of a Muslim saint, Shanbaz Qalandar, in Sehwan town, reports AFP.

Muslim worshipper killed in Kashmir

MUZAFFARABAD, Pakistan-Controlled Kashmir, Mar 8: A Muslim worshipper was killed and several others injured today when Indian troops opened fire on a mosque in a border village in the disputed state of Kashmir, officials here said. Indian troops resorted to "unprovoked firing" on Madarpur village, 50 kilometers west of Poonch when the imam had just started Jumma prayers, they said, reports AFP.

Russian minister goes to Chechnya

MOSCOW, Mar 8: Russian Interior Minister Anatoly Kulikov headed to Chechnya today for talks with military commanders and Chechen representatives on settling the conflict in the republic. Russian news agencies reported, Kulikov, who was accompanied by pro-Moscow Chechen leader Doku Zavgayev, was to meet with representatives of Chechen administrative and law enforcement bodies on ways to resolve the crisis in the republic according to the directives of President Boris Yeltsin, the Interior Ministry said, reports AFP.

5 die in US army chopper crash

WASHINGTON, Mar 8: A US army helicopter on a night training mission crashed in a snow storm in Kentucky, killing all five people aboard, an army spokesman said today. The MH-47 Chinook helicopter from the 160th special operations aviation regiment crashed in the vicinity of Russellville, Kentucky at 10 pm (0500 GMT) Thursday. Major Joe Howell at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, said reports AFP.

Sanskritik Jote rally tomorrow

Sammilita Sanskritik Jote will organise a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club at 3 pm tomorrow to extend its support to the non-stop non-cooperation programme sponsored by Awami League, reports UNB.

PM requests President to initiate dialogue

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia has requested President Abdur Rahman Biswas to invite all political parties to sit for a dialogue for resolving the present political impasse. This was disclosed by joint secretary general of the ruling BNP and Food and Agriculture Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan at the regular press briefing at his Bailey Road official residence in the city last night. "Just a few minutes back the Prime Minister requested the President to convene a dialogue as she wants an early solution to the crisis, is very sincere about it and thinks we are very close to a solution," Mannan Bhuiyan told the newsmen at 10:20 pm. The BNP leader further

said that the Prime Minister was yet to receive a reply to her recent letter to Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina. "But we have come to know that the opposition parties are ready to participate in talks, if initiated by the President. This is why the Prime Minister has made the request to the President," Mannan Bhuiyan added. When asked if only the agitating political parties or all political parties would be invited to the dialogue, Bhuiyan said it was a matter to be decided by the President. In reply to a question on the timing of the proposed dialogue, the Food and Agriculture Minister said it depends on the President. He, however, declined to clarify whether the PM met

Opposition welcomes, reiterates conditions

The mainstream opposition yesterday indicated that it would accept a Presidential initiative for a dialogue, but said it would join the talks provided some of its conditions were fulfilled. Prime Minister and BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia last night requested President Abdur Rahman Biswas to initiate a dialogue with the opposition political parties to end the long-drawn political

Allout non-cooperation begins today

By Staff Correspondent

The mainstream opposition launches an indefinite non-cooperation movement today demanding cancellation of the February 15 general elections, resignation of the present government and fresh election under a caretaker government. The movement sponsored by Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami aims at pressing home these demands. As part of the programme, the three parties have called for closure of all government offices including the Secretariat, non-government offices of deputy commissioner, thana nirbahi officers, semi-government and autonomous bodies, all courts, banks and insurance companies and educational institutions. They have also called for a total halt to all mechanised road, rail and water transports, air services and operation of the sea ports. Hospital, ambulance service, pharmacies, food shops, groceries, fire brigade, vehicles of municipalities and city

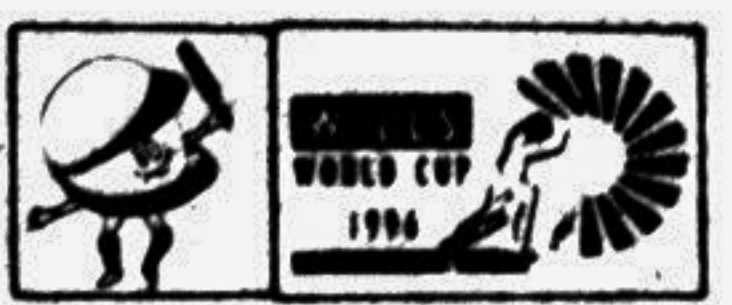
movement, said separate press releases of AL, JP and Jamaat last night. Rickshaws, however, would be exempted from the programme after 10 am everyday. Meanwhile, the three parties brought out separate processions in different areas of the city yesterday to drum up support for their movement. Markets, particularly those of grocery and food items, attracted larger number of buyers yesterday than on the normal Fridays. Many buyers complained of shortage of fresh meat, fish and vegetable. The inter-district bus terminals and the launch terminal in the city experienced a huge rush of people leaving the city. Rickshawpullers were found charging fare much more than the normal in various areas.



FACE TO FACE: Captain of the Pak team Wasim Akram (L) talks with Indian captain Mohammed Azharuddin at a hotel restaurant in Bangalore on the eve of their quarterfinal match of the World Cricket Cup. — APP/UNB photo

Pakistan vs India: Sri Lanka vs England

Quarterfinals today



FAISALABAD (Pakistan), Mar 8: Bookmakers are putting their money on Sri Lanka to win its quarterfinal match against England and even money on defending champion Pakistan to win its game against their old rival India, reports AP. Billed as the dream match of the World Cup tournament, India and Pakistan meet tomorrow in Bangalore in India. It has been nearly seven years since Pakistan has played in India, largely because of the troubled relationship between the two unfriendly neighbours. Hindu extremists have threatened to disrupt the Bangalore match but security is tight. Pakistan had to cancel two previous tours to India in 1992 and 1993 after loyalists of Hindu militant leader Bal Thackeray dug up Bombay's Wankhede Stadium pitch to prevent the tour. On Friday, police said fans will not be allowed to wave ei-

ther Indian or Pakistani flags in the stadium in Bangalore in an attempt to avoid trouble. Up to 2,000 policemen and Rapid Action Force Commandos will be stationed around the stadium, and 120 policemen will be in the Muslim neighbourhoods of the southern Indian city. Many of Bangalore's Muslims appeared nervous that they could be targeted by Hindu radicals if Pakistan wins. "I am not going to drive my taxi tomorrow. I will stay home," said Abdul Latif Karim. Sri Lanka vs England begins at 10:00 BST, India vs Pakistan at 15:00 BST. BTW will telecast the second match live. For detailed reports see pages 10,11.

to beat India. The countries have played 41 one-day cricket matches. Pakistan won 27, India won 12, and two games were rained out. In 1989, in their last competition in India, Pakistan won the Nehru Cup. Following Sri Lanka's astounding batting performance and three straight wins bookmakers say an win by England would be a major upset in the 12-nation World Cup tournament. Sri Lanka skipper Arjuna Ranatunga, however, said he would rather see his team start as underdogs. "We don't want to be favourites," Ranatunga said. "We want to be underdogs as usual." Sri Lanka topped Group A with 10 points with wins over Zimbabwe and India. They also were gifted two earlier victories by Australia and West Indies, both of whom refused to play their World Cup matches in Sri Lanka. England however has won only against tournament newcomers the Netherlands and United Arab Emirates and has lost to New Zealand, South Africa and Pakistan.

50 hurt during repolling in Narayanganj

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Mar 8: Over 50 people were injured, 15 with bullet, when anti-election activists clashed with police and BDR during repolling in 34 centres in the Narayanganj-5 constituency in the town today. Witnesses said over one thousand cocktails were exploded and at least one hundred shots were fired by the activists during the four-hour clashes which began on the Bangabandhu Road at 7:30 am. Police fired at least 40 rounds of tear gas shells and 20 shots, Shaheen, 25, one of the seriously injured persons, was admitted to the Narayanganj Hospital with a bullet injury in his eye. Others who were admitted to different clinics and hospitals include Ripon Saha, 22, Hapan, 28, Anwar, 25, Sohel, 34, Swapan Sarkar, 20, Mosharraf. See Page 12 col 8.

BDR firing kills 2 more in Rangpur

By Staff Correspondent

At least two people were killed in BDR firing in Rangpur while a teenager boy injured during repolling in Kishoreganj succumbed to his injuries yesterday. Repolling also could not be held in Sirajganj-1. Our Correspondent from Rangpur says, at least two people were killed and more than 300 injured when BDR opened fire on opposition activists who raised barricades to stop repolling in three constituencies of the district yesterday. Local people, however, claimed that five people were shot dead in the three constituencies. They said Sudha Roy, a 10 years old boy, died in BDR firing at Burirhat High School in Kowail thana at about 10 km. Police confirmed the death of Kapil (45) at Taraganj where

'Accept 5-pt proposal immediately'

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday called on the people to start an allout non-cooperation from today until the fall of "autocratic, vote-bribe and corrupt BNP government," reports UNB. Hasina, in a statement, asked the government to accept her 5-point proposal for an immediate solution of the longstanding political crisis. "The BNP chairperson is really sincere to mitigate the sufferings of the people, then she should immediately accept the proposals to end the crisis. Hasina's proposal includes release of all opposition leaders and workers from jail by March 9, cancellation of farcical election of February 15 and resignation of the government. She also proposed the President's initiative for an all party dialogue and the formation of caretaker government by March 11 for holding a

City BNP slates opposition programme

A joint meeting of the Dhaka Mohanagari BNP held yesterday evening condemned the indefinite programme thrown by several opposition political parties from today, reports BSS. Terming the programme as "anti-people" and "of killing the poor" the meeting observed that hatred had developed in the minds of people against the politicians because of such attitude of the Opposition. Held at its office premises, the meeting was presided over by the unit President Lt Gen (ret'd) Mir Shawkat Ali while party leaders, including

Hasina tells lawyers' rally People will form govt if President fails

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina has said if the President does not form a caretaker government by tomorrow, the people and the professional bodies would take initiative to form it. Sheikh Hasina was addressing a grand rally organised by the Bangladesh Lawyers' Coordination Council at the Supreme Court premises yesterday. "We will appeal to the people and all the professional bodies to take initiative to form a non-party caretaker government for holding election to the sixth Parliament if the President does not do so by March 10 and to announce a fresh schedule for the elections," Hasina said. The AL chief rejected the February 15 parliamentary elections terming it a farcical one and alleged that 70 lives were lost in violence during the so called elections. She held the Election Commission and the "illegal BNP government responsible for the killings. The nation is now divided — the BNP government, BDR, Army and Police are on the one side and the people are on the other side, she said. Hasina demanded release of 25,000 political activists and

Injured city BNP leader dies

By DMCH Correspondent
 A ward-level leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) who received bullet wounds at Adabar in the city on Saturday died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday morning. The deceased Faruk Hossain Babul, 40, joint secretary of Ward No 42, sustained bullet injuries in his head and belly when a gang of about five armed men attacked him near his house early Saturday, according to reports. Faruk, son of offt Badsha Miah of 61 North Adabar, Mohammadpur, succumbed to his injuries at the DMCH at around 11 am yesterday, medical sources said. The attackers in two motorbikes intercepted Faruk's bike when he was returning to his house at around 2 am, according to sources.

2 Shantibahini men killed

From Staff Correspondent
 CHITTAGONG, Mar 8: Two Shantibahini men were killed last night in separate incidents at Khagrachhari and Bandarban hill districts, law enforcing agency sources said. One of the victims was identified as Amar Bikash Chakma, 26. Amar was shot dead during an exchange of fire with securitymen at Panchpara village of Panchhari thana under Khagrachhari district. The exchange of fire began at 10 pm when the securitymen challenged a group of Shantibahini men who were engaged in collecting tolls from passing vehicles by putting barricade on Parachhara road, the sources added. Another Shantibahini man was beaten to death by a mob last night in Duluchharapara area under Bandarban district when a group of Shantibahini men went there to collect tolls from the villagers.

Series of processions, rallies in city Women demand equal rights

By Staff Correspondent

The International Women's Day was observed yesterday in the country with a call for equal rights and participation of women in all spheres of life. To mark the day, different government and non-government organisations arranged various programmes including seminars, rallies and cultural functions. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWCA) organised a discussion meeting at the Osmani Memorial Hall. Addressing the meeting as chief guest, State Minister for Women and Children Affairs, Begum Sarwari Rahman said the government is drafting a national policy and a plan of action for women's development. The State Minister called upon all concerned to continue their efforts for the advancement of women, particularly in the fields of education and employment. Sarwari also stressed the

need for creating awareness among women of their rights to help check "oppression" on women in society. "Oppression on women could be curbed through the implementation of existing laws, prompt action by police and judiciary concerning crimes committed against women, and by making women more conscious of their rights," the State Minister said. Editorial on page 4

The International Women's Day Observance Committee, comprising 28 women's bodies and some development organisations brought out a colourful procession from the city's Bangla Motor area to the Ramna Park, where a rally and a cultural function was held. About 1500 women, some in wheel-chairs, took part in the procession carrying banners and leaflets and chanting slogans demanding equal rights, justice and respect for all women. During the rally at the Ramna Botomul Rawniak Jahan read out a declaration on behalf of the Committee demanding equal job opportunities and wages for women, equal rights at home and at workplaces as well as equal share of property. The Sammilita Nari Samaj also brought out a procession from the Central Shaheed Minar to the National Museum, where it held a rally. See Page 12 col 7



Kangalini Rufia rendering Baul songs at the Ramna Batamul in the city at a function organised by the International Women's Day Celebration Committee yesterday. — Star photo

Teenaged girl shot dead in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent
 CHITTAGONG, Mar 8: A 14 years old girl was shot dead and three other pedestrians were injured with stray bullets when some masked gunmen opened fire at a house at Momin Road in the city this evening, witnesses and hospital sources said. The gunmen also exploded a bomb before fleeing the scene when local chased them. Witnesses said the girl was a garments factory worker but could not identify her.