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## Opposition leaders meet President, place demands

**By Staff Correspondent**

The country's simmering political crisis witnessed a silver lining yesterday when leaders of major political parties responded to President Abdur Rahman Biswas's invitation and met him in separate groups at the Bangabhaban yesterday, starting a process of dialogue.

The meetings were held with leaders of the Awami League, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and several other parties represented in the fifth Parliament.

Leaders of the ruling BNP are due to meet the President today at 4:30 pm.

Sources concerned said a roundtable conference is likely to be held shortly as a follow-up of the two-day meetings with the individual parties.

Formal invitations were extended to the political parties since Saturday night in phases by the President following a request from Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on Friday.

The request was made in view of the non-stop non-cooperation movement by the mainstream opposition who called for resignation of the present government, cancellation of the February 15 polls and formation of a neutral caretaker government for holding general elections. They said they would participate in dialogue only if the President initiates it.

A Bangabhaban announcement yesterday said that talks with the President were held in a cordial atmosphere. All the leaders appreciated

Prime Minister Biswas's initiative for resolving the political crisis and said they would sincerely cooperate with him in his endeavour in the greater interest of the nation.

The sources, however, said that the President listened to the demands and suggestions of the political leaders but did not make any suggestions of his own. He thanked them for responding promptly to his invitation and said that he would try to resolve the crisis on the basis of the opinions and suggestions put forward by the political parties.

According to Opposition sources, the leaders submitted to the President separate charters of demands, common among which were release of the remaining political prisoners,

## BNP leaders meet President today

**By Staff Correspondent**

Prime Minister and BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia along with her party's senior colleagues is scheduled to meet President Abdur Rahman Biswas at the Bangabhaban at 4:30 pm today.

This was said by Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Joint Secretary General of BNP and Food and Agriculture Minister at his Bailey Road official residence last night.

Asked about probable suggestions by his party at the talks with the President, Mannan Bhuiyan said, "Ours would be based on the three-point proposals the Prime Minister made in her March 3 address to the nation for resolving the crisis."

Responding to another question if his party would make any fresh proposal as response,

"We received the President's letter at around noon today. The letter is addressed to the Prime Minister and BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia," Mannan Bhuiyan told the newsmen.

Replying to a question, the BNP leader said Begum Zia is expected to lead the BNP delegation to be composed of the party's standing committee members and some other senior leaders including himself.

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## 'President gave a patient hearing, said nothing'

**By Staff Correspondent**

Some Opposition leaders who met President Abdur Rahman Biswas yesterday at Bangabhaban said that the head of the state gave them a patient hearing to their grievances, but did not make any comment.

The leaders of the Opposition were also expecting another round of the meeting with the President in a short time, after his scheduled meeting with leaders of the ruling BNP.

Mohammad Nasim, the Organising Secretary of Awami League who accompanied Sheikh Hasina to the meeting said that the President did not make any comment on their demands put forward before him. According to him, the President gave them a very patient hearing.

Moudud Ahmed, president member of the JP, said that the President was quite responsive and hoped that it

## Hasina urges President Promulgate ordinance for caretaker govt

**By Staff Correspondent**

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday requested the President to promulgate an ordinance for forming a caretaker government immediately and to fix the date for holding elections for the sixth Jatiya Sangsad by May.

"Khaleda Zia is nothing but an illegal Prime Minister after February 21. I have told the President that he had the legal authority and therefore should form a caretaker government through an ordinance by today (Sunday)," Hasina told a rally at Bangabandhu Avenue after the meeting with the President.

"Unless our demands are met, our non-cooperation movement will continue," she added.

The AL chief, along with the presidium members of the party met the President at Bangabhaban at 1.25 pm and came out smiling at around 2.45 pm. The AL delegates who were scheduled to meet the President at 11 am arrived late at the Bangabhaban on seven rickshaws, escorted by hundreds of AL activists.

Giving immediate reaction on the outcome of the meeting at the gate of Bangabhaban where over 60 journalists were waiting for hours, Amir Hossain Amu said, "I can't say whether it's negative or positive now. We have placed our demands to the President and he listened."

The meeting with the President began with one minute silence for the people who died in police firing in the movement for caretaker government. Hasina thanked the President for taking the initiative for holding dialogue.

Hasina told the rally that she urged the President to take necessary steps for declaring Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's post null and void on the ground of violation of the Constitution.

She alleged that Begum Zia had violated Article 71 of the Constitution by taking oath as a Member of Parliament before the results of the Feb-2 constituency, in which she was a candidate, were announced.

Hasina urged the President to promulgate an ordinance under Article 93 of the Constitution for forming a caretaker government with a neutral, non-partisan caretaker Prime Minister.

During the meeting with the President, Hasina was accompanied by AL Presidium members Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, Abdus Samad Azad, Zillur Rahman, Tofael Ahmed, Mohammad Nasim, Amir Hossain Amu, Abdul Jalil, Abdul Hannan, Abdul Momen



Awami League president Sheikh Hasina along with other party leaders coming out of the Bangabhaban after their meeting with President Abdur Rahman Biswas yesterday. — Star photo

## Second day of non-cooperation Thana gheraoed, clashes with police in Mirpur

**By Staff Correspondent**

At least 36 people received bullet and bomb injuries in sporadic incidents of violence in and around the city on the second day yesterday of the opposition-launched non-cooperation movement across the country.

In Mirpur Section-2, clashes between police and Opposition activists left at least 25 people including nine members of the law enforcing agencies injured.

When an opposition procession demanding release of some of their activists, arrested on the previous day, was passing by the Mirpur police station at 11:15 am, a powerful bomb was exploded beside a police van injuring two policemen — Naik Avenul Hossain and Naik Nazim.

The processionists also gheraoed the thana and started pelting stones and exploding crackers, witnesses said.

Immediately, police started lobbing tear gas shells and firing rubber bullets on the mob.

The clash lasted about to hours till 1 pm. One ansar personnel, four constables, one sergeant, and one sub-inspector were injured, police said.

Opposition activists put up barricades in front of the Fire Brigade training complex near the police station.

When police was removing the barricade in the evening a mob hurled bombs on the policemen. Police responded by lobbing tear gas shells.

In Farmgate area, one person was shot in the leg when BNP activists allegedly attacked a procession at about 11:30 am, witnesses said.

The AL procession coming from the old airport area was stopped near the Farmgate police box by members of the law enforcing agencies. At that time, a BNP procession coming there from the opposite direction suddenly attacked the AL procession, opening fire from cut rifles and throwing crackers, reports said.

A passerby, Nurunabi (35), was shot in the leg in the incident and was taken to the DMCH. Two other persons received minor injuries.

Later, as the BNP procession returned to its earlier position under the overbridge, police lobbed a number of tear gas shells on the activists and dispersed them.

Two bus passengers, Moazzem (17) and Halima, were injured at Dholapour and Demra when bombs were thrown on the buses they were travelling in at 3 pm and 6 pm. Both of them were admitted to the DMCH.

## President assures JP of helping find solution

**By Staff Correspondent**

Jatiya Party Acting Chairman Mirza Rahman Chowdhury said the President assured them of using his good offices in finding a solution to the long-drawn political deadlock in the country.

Emerging from the meeting with President Abdur Rahman Biswas held at Bangabhaban yesterday, Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, however, said that the non-cooperation movement would continue till the installation of a non-party caretaker government.

To a question of the newsmen, whether they might refuse any further meeting with the President if the JP chairman and former president HM Ershad was not released, he said, "I did not say so."

Replying to a question whether he sees any possibility of an all-party meeting by the President, he said, "I do not know."

The meeting scheduled to begin at 12:00 noon took place at around 3:00 pm and lasted for about 40 minutes.

During the meeting with the President Chowdhury was accompanied by presidium members Moudud Ahmed, Shah Moazzam Hossain, Kazi Zafar Ahmed, besides Shamim Al-Mamun and Monirul Huq Chowdhury.

The JP leaders went to meet the President on rickshaws as the second day of the

**NEWS BRIEFS**

**Mohiuddin meets Hasina**

Chittagong City Mayor and Awami League leader A B M Mohiuddin Chowdhury yesterday met Sheikh Hasina at her Dhanmondi residence immediately after his release from Dhaka Central Jail. Mohiuddin was arrested on February 28 in Chittagong in the wake of anti-government agitation. His arrest erupted widespread violence in the port city, reports UNB.

**Repolling in Comilla-9 Mar 13**

COMILLA, Mar 10: Repolling in Comilla-9 (Sadar-Laksham) constituency scheduled for tomorrow has been shifted. According to the district election officials, the election will now be held on March 13, reports UNB.

**FBCCI meet today**

Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) has called an emergency meeting of businessmen today to discuss the country's current situation. The meeting, scheduled to begin at 2 pm at the FBCCI auditorium, is expected to take some decisions regarding the businessmen's responsibility in such a political situation that hit hard the economic activities, reports UNB.

**Girl kidnapped**

MANIKGANJ, Mar 10: A primary school girl was abducted from Kawalipara area of Dhamrai thana at about 10 am today. Police said some unidentified men kidnapped Salma Akhter, 11, while she was going to school. Salma is the daughter of Ramjuddin of Radhanagar village in Dhamrai thana, reports UNB.

**Trial of Chun, Roh begins today**

SEOUL, Mar 10: The massacre and military trial of jailed ex-presidents Chun Doo-Hwan and Roh Tae-Woo opens here Monday in what the government calls righting the wrongs of South Korea's history, reports AFP.

## Farmers gherao DC, TNO offices for fertiliser

**From Our Correspondent**

RANGPUR, Mar 10: Several thousand farmers from different parts of the district gheraoed Deputy Commissioner's office here today and submitted a memorandum demanding fertilizer and diesel at fair price.

The protesters came to the town in processions and paraded the streets.

Later, they held a rally where they blamed the ruling party for the fertilizer crisis.

Urea and diesel are now being sold at double price, farmers said adding that it will affect Boro and Rabi farming badly.

UNB adds: Urea fertilizer sold at Tk 600 a bag of 50 kilogram in everywhere in the northern frontier district today, jumping from Tk 525-550 a bag Saturday, according to farmers and fertilizer traders.

Prices of fertilizer marked a phenomenal rise in recent days in the northern districts.

Urea sold at Tk 400-500 per bag in many places in North Bengal against the factory price of Tk 186.25. In the

## Four teams fight for semis today

**Championship. There is nothing to keep us motivated now.**

It's up to India or Sri Lanka to keep the World Cup title in South Asia — no easy task when faced with tough sides from Australia and South Africa, which must first advance from their quarterfinal matches.

South African skipper Hansie Cronje and his squad were preparing for tomorrow's quarterfinal against a revived West Indies side.

Traditional rivals Australia and New Zealand, meanwhile.

**BTV will telecast live the SA-WI match commencing at 10:00 (BST)**

face injury problems going into their quarterfinal.

Australian captain Mark Taylor feels his squad will have no trouble in walking all over an inexperienced New Zealand side who are missing fast bowler Danny Morrison and all-rounder Gavin Larsen.

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## 15 projects involving Tk 1151cr okayed

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (NEC) in a meeting approved the 250-bed Dinajpur medical college hospital project at a cost of Taka 21.20 crore, reports BSS.

The project scheduled to be completed by the year 1998. The cost will be met from the government's own resources.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman presided over the meeting held in the secretary's cabinet room yesterday.

ECNEC also okayed the 4th phase of the Expanded Programme of Immunisation (EPI) project at a cost of Taka 410 crore. The project aimed at bringing 90 per cent of the children of the country to the 180 crore under EPI coverage within the year 2000. The government of Bangladesh will provide Taka 173 crore for the project.

The meeting also approved the Chittagong airport development project at a cost of Taka 30 crore. The project is an interim scheme which is a part of the overall development of the airport aimed at providing landing and take-off facilities for the wide-bodied aircraft. The project work is expected to be completed by June 1997.

The registered non-governmental primary scheme development project also got ECNEC approval today at a cost of Taka 284 crore. The project scheduled to be completed by June 2000 aimed at rebuilding and repair of 5000 registered non-government primary schools throughout the country.

The Finance Minister directed the concerned executive agencies to ensure effective use of the public money taking into consideration the topographic and soil condition of the various parts of the country.

The ECNEC meeting also approved the 'ideal village' for rehabilitating the landless families' project at a cost of Taka 77 crore with a foreign aid of Taka 41 crore which includes a foreign exchange component of Taka 10 crore. The project aimed at creation of 1100 ideal villages to rehabilitate more than 35 thousand landless families across the country during the current financial year.

ECNEC meeting also approved the 4th rural development project aimed at development, rehabilitation and maintenance of rural infrastructure of 36 thanas under greater Faridpur and Kurigram districts to increase agricultural output and economic and trade activities of these thanas. The project involving a cost of Taka 169 crore is expected to be completed by this year.

Cyclic rehabilitation project covering the districts of greater Noakhali, Chittagong and Cox's Bazar districts was also okayed by the ECNEC at a cost of Taka 21.54 crore. The cost of the project scheduled to be completed by 1996-97 will be provided by the Saudi Arabia.

ECNEC meeting also approved in principle to bring the thana headquarters of the country under the gas distribution network in phases under a five year plan.

The ECNEC also approved the setting up of 11 youth training centres project which also included development and finishing of remaining works of the existing youth centres of the country. The project involving a cost of Taka 59 crore is expected to be completed by June 2000.

ECNEC also approved seven other projects. These are strengthening of the nuclear agriculture research institute at a cost of Taka 19 crore, Kurigram irrigation and flood control project 1st phase at a

## Manju, Matiya and Mohiuddin freed

**By Staff Correspondent**

Three opposition leaders detained under the Special Powers Act (SPA) were released from jail yesterday, according to their family members and jail officials.

Jatiya Party Secretary General Anwar Hossain Manju, Awami League Agriculture Secretary Begum Matiya Chowdhury and AL leader and Mayor of Chittagong City Corporation ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury were released.

Manju was released from Kustia jail at about 12:45 pm and returned to Dhaka last night. On his way back in a private vehicle — a banner fastened with it reading "Journalist" — the JP Secretary General reportedly addressed six roadside rallies at various places. He also addressed the Bar Council members at Kustia.

Matiya Chowdhury and Mohiuddin were released from the Dhaka Central Jail in the evening.

The JP Secretary General, also the owner editor of the Dally Ittefaq, was arrested on February 24 night from near Tejgaon in the city, while returning from the Banani JP office. He was later jailed under a one-month detention.

Matiya was also arrested on February 24 from in front of the Bangladesh Secretariat. The High Court Division on March 7 declared the detention of Matiya Chowdhury as illegal and made without lawful authority, and ordered the government to release her if she is not wanted in any other case.

The Chittagong Mayor was arrested from his office on February 28. Mohiuddin Chowdhury's arrest sparked off widespread violence and protest in the port city.

These releases of political leaders came on the wake of a dialogue process initiated by the President upon a request from the Prime Minister on Friday last.

## Jamaat hopeful about success of talks with President

Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday requested the President to immediately form a caretaker government to hold fresh parliamentary election for the 6th Parliament by mid-May, reports UNB.

The party also called for cancellation of the February 15 "farical" election, stopping repolling where election results were postponed and resignation of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

A Jamaat delegation made the request when it called on President Abdur Rahman Biswas at Bangabhaban, responding to his initiative to end the country's staggering political crisis.

During a hour-long meeting from 4 pm, delegation leader Maulana Mubtahir Rahman Nizami, the Jamaat secretary general, explained the current political situation and the necessity of a caretaker government to conduct future polls freely and fairly.

Nizami told the President that he should promulgate an ordinance within the shortest possible time, form a caretaker government and announce fresh date for election to the 6th parliament, "if he (President) wants to see his

## 2 Sirajganj BCL leaders succumb to injuries

SIRAJGANJ, Mar 10: Two more people died from bullet injuries suffered in the BDR firing during repolling on March 6 in Rayganj thana of the district, reports UNB.

Chhatra League leaders Masud Rana and Jasmat succumbed to their injuries at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital Saturday night. Their bodies were brought to their village homes at Chandakona this morning.

With these, the death toll from the Bhuiyaganj firing rose to 4. Ananda Mohanta died on way to Bogra Hospital on the day while Golam Kibria Bulbul died the following day.

Two more injured — Shaiful Islam and Zia — were today sent to Dhaka in critical condition.

A heart rending scene was created when the bodies of Rana and Jasmat were brought to Chandakona. Thousands of people thronged there to have a glimpse of the deceased students.

Later, namaj-e-janaza for them was held at the Chandakona College premises. Thousands of mourners attended the funerals.

Meanwhile, repolling in Sirajganj-1 (Kazipur) constituency scheduled for tomorrow has been postponed.

According to the district election officials, the election to the constituency postponed following a fierce clash between Awami League and BNP activists in the morning that left at least 25 people injured.

Witnesses said the trouble erupted in front of the DC office where the opposition activists staged a sit-in to protest repolling in Sirajganj-1 (Kazipur) constituency.

They said a group of armed BNP activists attacked the

## GF's suggestion to President

Gono Forum last night suggested to President Abdur Rahman Biswas to consult with three former chief justices to find out ways and means for resolving the current political impasse, reports BSS.

The Gono Forum leaders led by its president Dr Kamal Hossain put forward their suggestion when they met the President at Bangabhaban.

The leaders also expressed their unanimity with the views of other opposition parties to hold elections under a caretaker government.

The leaders included Pankaj Bhattacharya, Saikuddin Ahmed Manik, Mostafa Khalil Moutu, Maj Gen (retd) Khalilur Rahman and Noorjahan Morshed.