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NEWS BRIEFS

Autonomy of radio,
TV demanded

The Left Democratic Front
yesterday held a rally demanding
autonomy of radio and
television and stoppage of
harassment to the journalists to
ensure free press. The leaders
said autonomy of radio and
television was compatible with
democracy. The rally was held
at the Tophkhana Road crossing,
reports BSS.

Sec 144 in Muladi
thana HQs

BARISAL, Mar 12: Local
administration today imposed
Section 144 in Muladi thana
headquarters to avert further
clash between ruling BNP and
opposition activists. The
authorities imposed the restriction
in the area following
Monday's clash between the
rival activists that left 40 people
injured. Meanwhile, opposition
activists in Patuakhali district
hurled crude bombs at the
DC's office and damaged Sadar
thana engineer office in the
morning, reports BSS.

One choked
to death

BARISAL, Mar 12: One Nur
e-Alam, 14, was choked to
death when a hot fish which he
caught by teeth entered his
throat. Alam, a student of Class
Ten, was reportedly fishing at
a pond at Alpara under Wazirpur
thana of the district when
the accident occurred. He was
immediately taken to the hospital
where the attending physicians declared him dead, reports BSS.

Hartal observed
in Kishoreganj

KISHOREGANJ, Mar 12: A
six-hour hartal was observed
peacefully in the town today in
protest against the killing of a
pro-Awami League Chhatra
League worker. Three BCL
activists received bullet injury in
a clash with BDR during re-
polling in Kishoreganj-3 consti-
tuency on March 7. Of them,
Sirajul Islam, Siraj died on the
fifth day, reports BSS.

The Daily Star

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DHAKA WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 1996

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President, 2 former CJs discuss caretaker govt

By Staff Correspondent

Two former chief justices of the Supreme Court, Habibur Rahman and Badrul Haider Chowdhury, met President Abdur Rahman Biswas at the Bangabhaban yesterday at the latter's invitation.

Former chief justice Shahabuddin Ahmed who also received an invitation, however could not respond as family sources said that he was unavailable.

It was learnt that the President discussed with the two former chief justices the constitutional position and legal modalities for the formation of a caretaker government.

During their nearly three-hour meeting with the President, the two former chief justice also put forward their views and suggestions on how to resolve the present political crisis.

Talking to The Daily Star, Justice Habibur Rahman said that he would not like to divulge the contents of his discussions and added, "I have taken a word from the

President that neither he nor I will reveal the contents of the meeting."

When asked if he would head an advisory council as the immediate past chief justice, he replied: "I have retired on May 1. I am an ordinary citizen like you. At this moment I will not reply to this question."

Justice Badrul Haider Chowdhury told The Daily Star that he had extensive discussions with the President about the legal aspects and possible modalities of the caretaker government.

Asked if the legality of the February 15 polls was discussed during the meeting, Justice Chowdhury replied: "We refused to discuss about the February 15 issue."

He said the visit to Bangabhaban was a courtesy call and termed the talks with the President as "academic discussions."

UNB adds, Awami League Presidium member Amir Hossain Anu yesterday met President Biswas at Bangabhaban and discussed matters relating to the formation of a neutral non-party caretaker government.

During the parley Anu reaffirmed Opposition's demand for scrapping the February 15 "farce" elections, resignation of Prime Minister Begum Khaleida Zia and fresh voting under a neutral caretaker government.

Anu again requested the President to exercise his constitutional power to constitute a neutral caretaker government for immediately holding fresh Parliament elections.

President's letters to party chiefs

President Abdur Rahman Biswas yesterday sent letters to the chiefs of different political parties and groups represented in the Fifth Parliament requesting them to communicate immediately their views on the modalities and possible steps for formation of a neutral caretaker government, reports BSS.

Amu again requested the President to exercise his constitutional power to constitute a neutral caretaker government for immediately holding fresh Parliament elections.

Non-cooperation programme relaxed

By Staff Correspondent

The Opposition political parties yesterday announced partial relaxation in their non-cooperation programme through separate press releases.

The non-cooperation movement launched from Saturday will, however, continue for an indefinite period till the opposition demands were met, the parties said.

Today, banks will remain open for two hours from 2 pm to 4 pm, shops for six hours from 4 pm to 10 pm. Private export-oriented industries, particularly the garments factories are allowed to operate for 18 hours, from 4 pm to 5 am, from today until further announcement according to Opposition press releases.

The AL press release, however, added that black flags would be hoisted at shops to show respect to the martyrs of the current movement.

Hospitals, ambulances, medicine shops, kutchas, bazaars, fire brigade, fertiliser and oil transports, conservancy service, vehicles carrying newsmen and newspapers, and other essential services like water, gas and electricity supply will remain out of the purview of the programme, as announced earlier.

Hasina urges BDR
police not to
obey orders of
'illegal govt'

Awami League president Sheikh Hasina has urged the law enforcing agencies, including BDR and Police, as well as government officials and employees "not to obey the orders of the illegal government", reports UNB.

If any person becomes victimised for disobeying the order of this illegal government, the people's government in future will compensate for it," she said in a statement.

Demanding cancellation of the February 15 election, Hasina said if a parliament of "vote-thieves" gets legitimacy, chances of free and fair election in future will be bleak. In that case, rigging in elections even under a neutral party government will not stop.

She said if it is ensured that one cannot be a member of parliament by stealing votes, now will feel encouraged to do so in future. And this would allow the electorates to cast

See Page 12 Col 3

BNP call to
withdraw
programme

By Staff Correspondent

The ruling BNP has once again urged the major opposition parties to call off their non-cooperation programme against the backdrop of a dialogue, initiated by the President, to resolve the political impasse.

At the regular press briefing yesterday evening the BNP office secretary Nazrul Islam Khan said, "We urge the opposition parties to withdraw their programme as we hope the President's initiative for resolving the crisis through dialogue will succeed."

Asked how he was optimistic for a solution as both the ruling and the opposition parties appeared uncompromising about the February 15 polls, he said, "We hope the Opposition will change their stance after their main demand for a caretaker government was accepted and the ruling party gave concessions to them one after another."

Nazrul Islam Khan spoke to the newsmen in the absence of the BNP joint secretary general and Food and Agriculture Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, currently the party's

See Page 12 Col 7

Gasoline supply
insufficient
in city

Star Report

There was insufficient supply of gasoline in the city on the fourth day of the non-cooperation movement yesterday.

Some attendants at the roadside filling stations at Airport road, Mohakhali, Mirpur, Sayedabad, Shymoli and Dhanmondi said they themselves did not have the supply. While others said the owners did not take the risk of keeping the petrol pumps open due to the programme of the opposition parties.

In one filling station near the Rajarbagh police lines, a large number of buses were seen waiting for fuel. According to some drivers all these buses plying on city routes were being provided with 20

See Page 12 Col 2

Legal experts tell The Daily Star

Presidential ordn can help resolve crisis

By R M Titumir

man Amirul Islam, and a public-interest lawyer Barrister Lutfur Rahman Shahjahan — to find a legal way out of the persisting political impasse.

Barrister Rafiqul Haq said: "In the present situation, considering the gravity of the crisis, it is advisable for both the parties to agree to an ordinance promulgated under Article 93 read with Article 48 of

the Constitution."

If the President has any doubt about his power to promulgate an ordinance to perform functions under Article 48, he may refer the issue to the Supreme Court for its opinion, the former Attorney General added.

Barrister Amirul Islam said:

See Page 12 Col 3

Three leading lawyers said that the President could promulgate an ordinance for setting up a non-party government to hold elections with a view to resolving the lingering political crisis.

The Daily Star yesterday talked to three legal experts — former Attorney General Barrister Rafiqul Haq, Bar Council Executive Committee Chair-

man Amirul Islam, and a public-interest lawyer Barrister Lutfur Rahman Shahjahan — to find a legal way out of the persisting political impasse.

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