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Interim Govt by Ordinance is the Answer

by A M A Muhith

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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 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 UNB.

One choked to death

BARISAL, Mar 12: One Nur-e-Alam, 14, was choked to death when a kot fish which he caught by teeth entered his throat. Alam, a student of Class Ten, was reportedly fishing at a pond at Atipara 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 repelling in Kishoreganj-3 constituency on March 7. Of them, Sirajul Islam Siraj died on the following day, reports UNB.

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 Bagabhaban 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 unwell.

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 justices 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.

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.

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 as a courtesy call and termed the talks with the President as "academic discussions."

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

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

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 13 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, bazzars, 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 yesterday.

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 non-party government will not stop.

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

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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 of 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 about the dialogue and 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

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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, Shyamoli 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

Three leading lawyers said that the President could promulgate an ordinance, for settling 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-

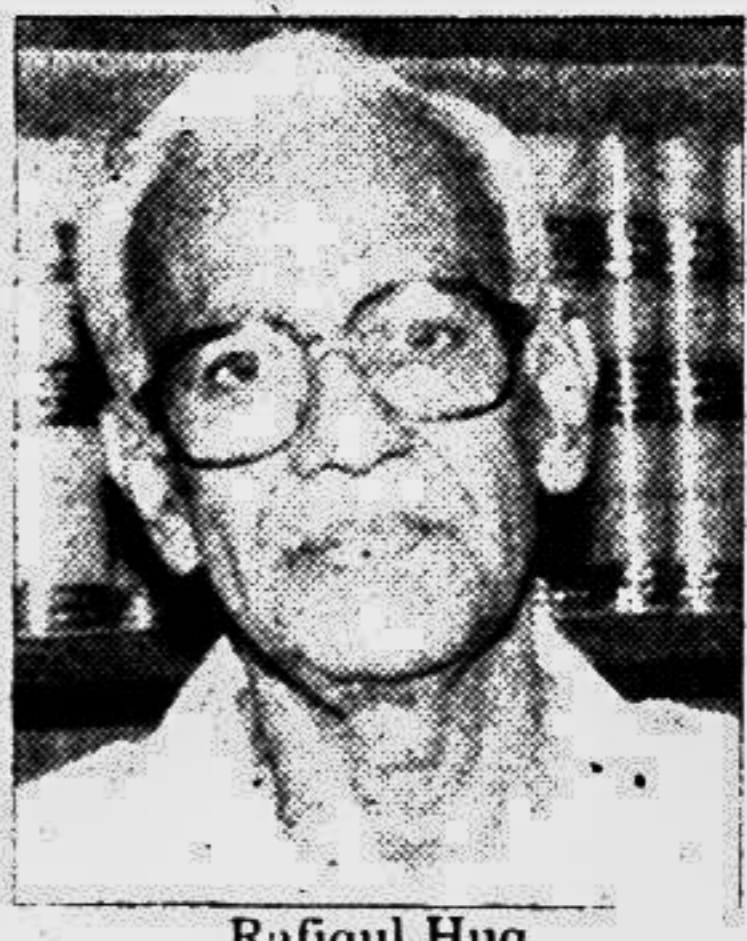
man Amirul Islam, and a public-interest lawyer Barrister Lutfor Rahman Shahjahan — to find a legal way out of the persisting political impasse.

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

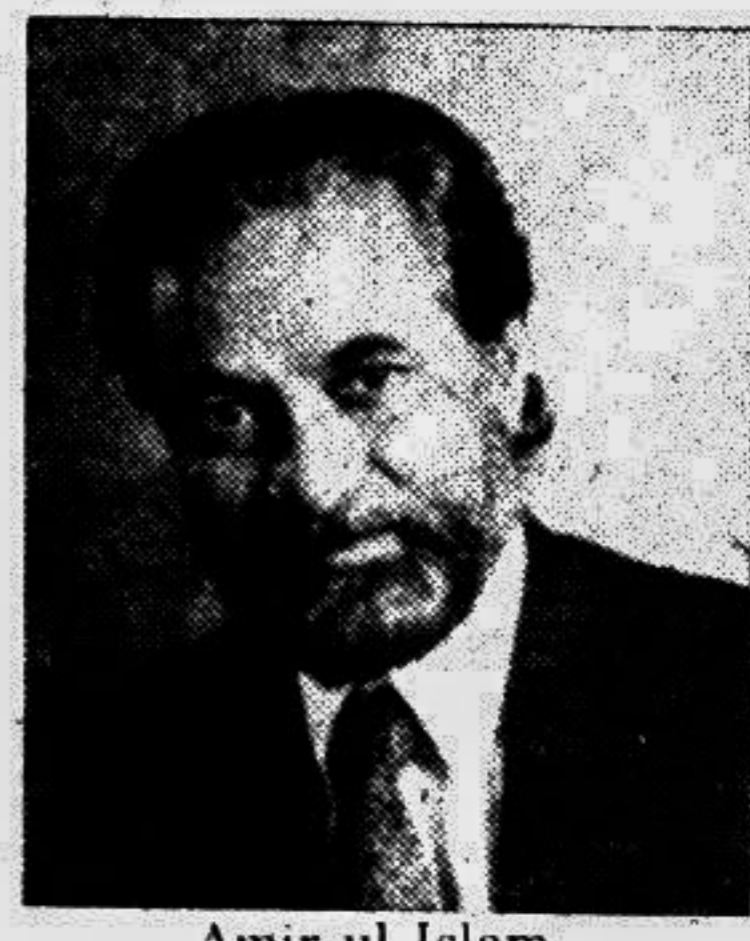
the Constitution." If the President has any doubt about his power to promulgate an ordinance to perform functions under Article 48, he may refer the issue to the Supreme Court for its opinion, the former Attorney General added.

Barrister Amirul Islam said: "If the Prime Minister under

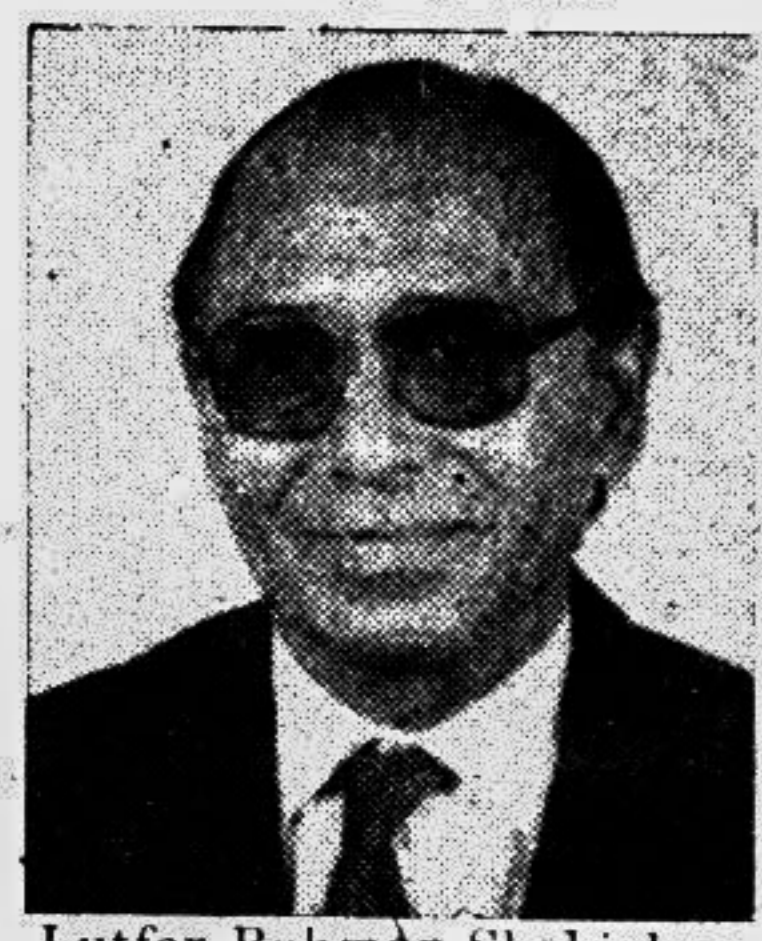
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Rafiqul Haq



Amirul Islam



Lutfor Rahman Shahjahan

Opposition sits today to finalise outline of caretaker govt

By Staff Correspondent

The Opposition political parties will discuss the possible composition of the proposed caretaker government today, according to some senior Opposition leaders.

The Opposition parties including Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami received separate letters from the President requesting them to send proposals regarding the structure of the caretaker administration.

Mohammad Nasim, AL Organising Secretary, said: "We shall prepare the final draft on the size and strength of the caretaker government after discussing the issue in the joint meeting of the three parties."

When asked about the possible composition of the caretaker government, Anwar

Hossain Manju, the secretary general of JP, said: "We shall discuss the matter today in the joint meeting of the three parties."

He, however, hinted that there is no scope of any major shift as to who is supposed to head the caretaker government and what should be his terms of reference in running the affairs of the state during the interim period.

According to a formula outlined earlier by the opposition, the head of the caretaker government either has to be the chief justice, or the immediate past chief justice, or any justice of the appellate division, or some one agreed upon by consensus, an opposition leader noted.

Such an interim government

See Page 12 col 1

Business leaders for relaxation of non-cooperation

Five leading leaders of the business community yesterday made a fervent appeal to the opposition political parties to make some selective relaxation from the non-cooperation programme immediately to save the country's economy from long-term damage, reports BSS.

In a joint statement, they pleaded with the opposition leaders to give relaxation to ports and financial institutions for starting functioning. A large number of ships stranded at the outer anchorage of Chittagong port would be compelled to leave and unload consignments in other countries if the port does not resume operation immediately. Foreign shipping lines have already started excluding Bangladesh ports from their sailing schedules, they said.

They further pointed out that continued closure of ports and financial institutions would force closure of important business enterprises within

See Page 12 col 1

AL rejoinder

Awami League joint secretary Abdul Jalil, in a rejoinder issued yesterday claimed that the AL delegation, which met the President Sunday, did not put forward any suggestion that "by virtue of his powers, the President could take steps including seeking a reference from the Supreme Court about the controversial February 15 elections."

The AL joint secretary referred to a report published in The Daily Star yesterday which was based on telephonic conversation with secretary general Zillur Rahman.

BGMEA leaders likely to meet President today

By Staff Correspondent

Representatives of garments factory owners are planning to meet President Abdur Rahman Biswas today.

They will request him to take initiatives with the leaders of both BNP and the opposition parties for keeping the ports, garments factories and related transports outside the purview of the non-cooperation programme.

Redwan Ahmed, president of the BGMEA, yesterday told its members in an emergency meeting that the leaders have sought an appointment with the President and are expected to meet him today.

The BGMEA leaders have been frantically trying to contact the political leaders to

See Page 12 Col 2

Two murdered in city

By DMCH Correspondent

Two persons were murdered in separate incidents in the city yesterday.

An unidentified man, aged about 25, was found dead in New Colony, Asad Gate under Mohammadpur thana at around 8 am, police said.

There were marks of cut injuries over the body and the two hands of the victim were tied.

The motive behind the killing could not be known immediately. The body was sent to the Dhaka Medical

See Page 12 Col 2

Sri Lanka face India in semifinal today



KARACHI, Mar 12: Sri Lanka today face one last hurdle before leaping into cricket's Hall of Fame when they meet neighboring India in the first World Cup semifinal in Calcutta, reports AP.

Captain Arjuna Ranatunga's long-cherished dream is to make Sri Lanka the best team by year 2000 and he feels winning the semifinal against India will be good as winning the cup itself.

"Our initial goal was to reach the semifinal," Ranatunga said. "We've done that." Sri Lanka had managed just four wins in 26 World Cup outings prior to the current series. But it has managed to double its record with wins over Zimbabwe, India and Kenya in qualifying round matches. The squad thrashed England in its quarterfinal.

Sri Lanka's batting has revolutionised one-day cricket and there have been calls for changes to the rules to protect

the fielding side.

Sri Lanka's success is thanks to its openers, particularly left-hander Sanath Jayasuriya, who has amassed 158 runs off just 158 balls.

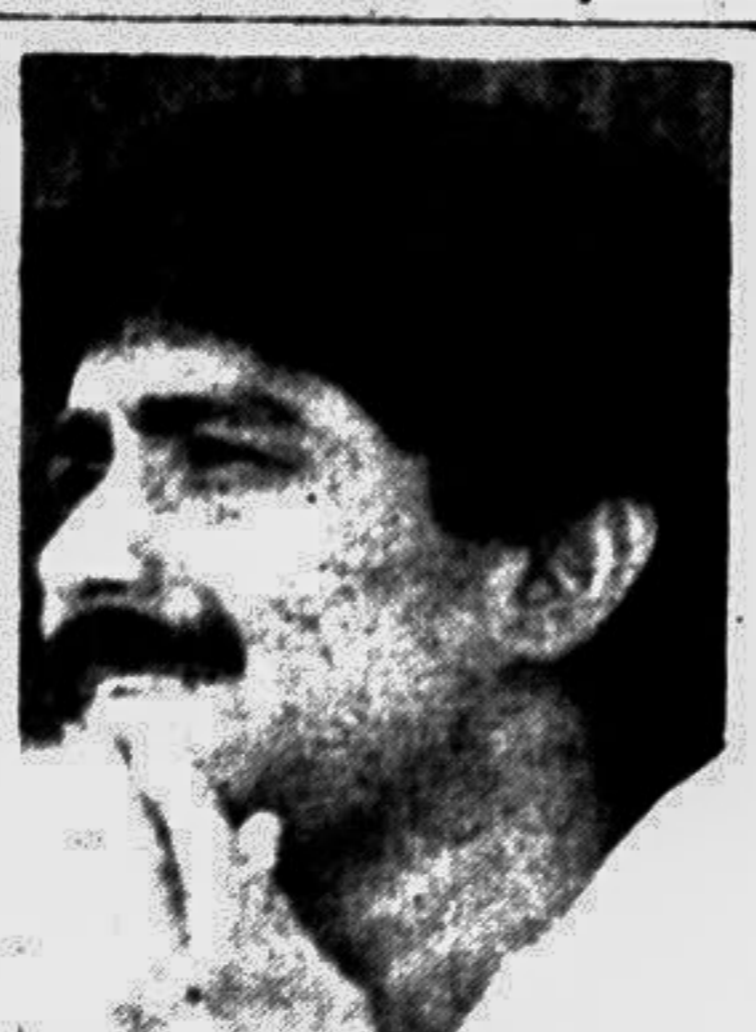
Jayasuriya, 27, has shredded opposition bowlers throughout the tournament. He smashed 79 to setup a great Sri Lanka win over India in New Delhi and hit a 44-ball 82 against England in the quarterfinal.

BTV will show the match live commencing from 15:00 (BST)

Still, Sri Lanka will be up against a rejuvenated Indian side who will appear in their third World Cup semifinal. In 1983 India, led by Kapil Dev, went on to win the Cup but in 1987 they lost to England.

Eden Gardens in Calcutta is a happy hunting ground for skipper Mohammad Azharuddin, who is yet to lose a one-day under his captaincy at Indian cricket's top venue.

See also pages 10, 11



Miandad retires

KARACHI, Mar 12: Batsman Javed Miandad today announced his retirement from international cricket, claiming his skills were not properly utilized during the World Cup, reports AP.

"They could have used me better," he told reporters. "I was pushed down the batting order and forced to bat at number six instead of sending me in at number three or four."

Miandad, 38, said he should have been asked to lead Pakistan against India rather than putting all the pressure on an inexperienced player like

See Page 12 Col 2

EC withholds repolling in 10 constituencies

By Staff Correspondent

The Election Commission (EC) has withheld repolling in all the 10 remaining parliamentary constituencies for an indefinite period as the respective returning officers have expressed their inability to hold repolling in view of the present 'violent situation' according to an EC official.

District Commissioners (DCs) from Rangpur, Sirajganj, Shariatpur, Gopalganj and Comilla have informed the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) that it was not 'congenial' to hold the repolling in many of the centres at different constituencies.

Quoting the faxed letter of the Rangpur DC, the EC official said 'people were resisting any activity regarding repolling in the six constituencies under the district therefore it was not congenial to hold any repolling'.

Chief Election Commissioner Justice AKM Sadeque told this correspondent yesterday that once the situation got better the EC would conduct repolling in those constituencies.

Repolling could not be held in 3,777 centres of 84 constituencies on February 15 due to rigging, violence, absence of

polling officers and other complications.

The EC had finished repolling at all these constituencies except ten — six constituencies in Rangpur, one constituency each in Sirajganj, Shariatpur, Gopalganj and Comilla.

The EC official said that the results of at least three constituencies — two under Lakshipur district and one under Madaripur, were kept pending as hearings would take place at the EC on March 17, following complaints filed by a candidate.