

Gunbattle around BNP MP's house in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Mar 14: At least 10 people were injured in sporadic gunfights and bomb blasts in the port city today, the sixth day of the non-cooperation movement.

They were admitted to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital and private clinics.

Police said, the residence of BNP leader and MP-elect Golam Akbar Khondakar at Mehdiabag was attacked by opposition activists.

Police opened fire to disperse the attackers. According to witnesses, police and opposition activists traded gunfire for some time.

When contacted Golam Akbar alleged that the opposition activists hurled bombs at his residence damaging the windows.

In the face of firing by police the activists fled the spot, Akbar said.

Witnesses said, after the attack on Akbar's residence, JCD activists were locked in a gun-battle with their opponents for about two hours at Mehdiabag and around the medical college hospital campus. Both the

Rail links remain snapped for third day

Star Report

Rail communication across the country remained totally snapped for the third day yesterday as the Opposition called indefinite non-cooperation programme continued.

Meanwhile, the railway authorities failed to deploy security personnel in trains during the non-cooperation programme, demanded by drivers, following mob attacks on train, said a driver requesting anonymity.

Wailul Islam, Secretary Railway Division was contacted last night for his comment on this issue. Declining to make any comment, Islam, advised The Daily Star correspondent to contact the Director General (Operations) Railway. The DG Railway, however, was not available on phone last night.

When contacted, a source in the GRP said, "We received letters from the drivers requesting for escort in each train for operation during the non-cooperation programme."

The sources disclosed that the GRP had only 20 security men for Kamalapur railway station and had to requisition 4 platoons from Dhaka Metropolitan Police, Reserve Police, Armed Police Battalion and paramilitary BDR.

"We brought to the notice of the drivers that it was not possible to provide security escort in each train," the sources said.

The train drivers claimed that eight of their colleagues were assaulted as they tried to operate trains during the first few days of the non-cooperation movement and their train were stranded at various stations like Bidiyaganj near Mymensingh, Amiganj near Narsingdi and Neelganj near Kishoreganj.



THE LAST HURRAH. Lanky West Indian paceman Curtly Ambrose exults after trapping prolific Aussie batsman Mark Waugh for a duck during their nail-biting World Cup semifinal in Chandigarh yesterday.

President urged to take a 'quick & bold' step

A joint meeting of the representatives of business community, development agencies and professional groups yesterday called upon the President to take a 'quick' and 'bold' step to resolve the present political crisis on the basis of a national consensus, reports BSS.

Welcoming the initiative the meeting urged upon the President not to take more time and save the nation from confrontation and frustration.

The meeting expressed its solidarity with the action programme of Bangladesh Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FCCI) including its March 16 Shajpa Chatra public rally.

The meeting also formed a steering committee with FCCI President Salman F. Rahman and ADA Chairperson Dr. Quazi Faruque Ahmed as joint convenor to launch the movement for realisation of various demands including holding of fresh national election under a caretaker government.

Presided over by Dr. Quazi Faruque Ahmed the meeting was attended, among others, by the representatives of ADAB, FCCI, BMA, Engineers Institution of Bangladesh, Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ), Bangladesh Polytechnic Teachers Association, Trinamul Janasangathan, and Swadhinata Chikitsak Parishad.

The Midnight File

Pakistan urges US to commit itself to 'one China' policy

ISLAMABAD, Mar 14: Pakistan today urged the US to commit itself to 'one China' policy in conformity with the three joint communiqués with China. Foreign Ministry spokesman Gul Hanif, when asked to comment on the Sino-US tension on the Taiwan issue at a weekly news briefing here, said the US signed three communiqués with China supporting 'one China' policy, reports Xinhua.

3 Indian troops among 17 killed in Kashmir

NEW DELHI, Mar 14: Three Indian soldiers were among 17 people killed in a sudden spurt in violence in the troubled state of Kashmir, the PTI reported today, reports AFP.

Muslim guerillas ambushed an army patrol in the southern Kashmir district of Anantnag late Tuesday, killing a captain and a soldier, officials were quoted as saying in the summer capital of Srinagar. Another soldier died from his injuries in hospital.

Indian security forces shot dead nine Muslim militants in three different places in the Kashmir valley Wednesday and today while three militants died in internecine clashes, PTI said. Two other militants were arrested by the army.

Muslim militants also killed two policemen, including one who had been abducted earlier.

The sudden upsurge in violence in Kashmir came as Indian authorities prepared to hold talks for the first time with four former prominent guerillas here in a bid to end the Muslim separatist drive in the state.

More than 12,000 people have been killed in the separatist campaign since 1989, India accuses Pakistan of arming the militants. Islamabad denies this but supports the unrest, calling in a self-determination struggle.

India and Pakistan dispute the ownership of the Himalayan province of Kashmir and have fought two wars over it.

Delegation leader Baidy cautioned that "negotiations are a process and not a conclusion" and stressed that there would be "no compromise on our basic stand" of an end to Indian rule over Kashmir.

The other three former militants participating in the

Egypt summit pledges to fight terrorism

SHARME-EL-SHEIKH, Egypt, Mar 14: Presidents, kings and other leaders of 27 countries from North America to the Gulf have lent their support to Israeli and Palestinian leaders at a critical moment in the Middle East peace process, reports Reuters.

At a one-day summit in the Red Sea resort of Sharm-el-Sheikh they promised to work together against the political violence which has undermined domestic support for Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

Official spokesman said their governments were happy with the outcome. US President Bill Clinton said the summit was a historic demonstration of the strength of peace in the Middle East today.

Arafat, embarked on politically risky crackdown on the Islamist organisation Hamas, said the summit had reinforced the peace process and he was confident Israel would meet his most urgent demand — lifting a blockade of Palestinian territories.

The summit avoided the most controversial issues, such as naming the countries which support violent dissidents or asking Israel for specific steps to win over Palestinians so desperate they are willing to blow themselves up for their cause.

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Industrial loss assessment cell formed

The Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI) has formed an industrial loss assessment cell to evaluate the industrial losses being caused by the present political crisis, a press release of the BCI said yesterday, reports BSS.

Announcing the formation of the cell, BCI President A M Subid Ali said, in a statement, that the burden and liabilities of the industrial crisis would have to be shouldered by any future government.

Ali said the nation could see a little hope at the relaxation of the non-cooperation movement in regard to banks, garments factories and shops in the interest of the people, and the demonstration of sincerity by the opposition parties responding to the call of the President for discussion.

President will be controversial if JS summoned: WP

Workers Party general secretary Rashed Khan Menon yesterday said the position of the President would be controversial if the Parliament, which he alleged, was elected through 'vote fraud', is summoned, reports BSS.

Addressing a protest meeting in front of the National Press Club, Menon said the situation of the country might become unmanageable, if the presidential initiative to resolve the political crisis fails.

He said the formation of a neutral caretaker government is not a problem now, because there has already been a national consensus in this regard. The problem now is the resignation of the government and annulment of the February 15 elections, he said.

President over by party secretary Nurul Alam, the meeting was addressed by Shah Alam, Abul Hussain and Akhtar Sohan Mashroor.

Professionals call to cancel Feb 15 polls

A group of leading professionals yesterday called for immediate cancellation of the polls held on February 15 and resignation of the Prime Minister to pave the way for holding the next elections under a caretaker government, reports BSS.

In a statement in Dhaka the professionals expressed their grave concern at the deterioration in the present political situation and said democracy and economy were now facing a dangerous consequences as the result of the attitude of the ruling party.

The signatories to the statement included Prof. Syed Modasser Ali of the Bangladesh Medical Association, Advocate Shamsul Huq Chowdhury of the Bangladesh Lawyers' Coordinating Council, Prof. Moslehuddin Ahmad, a former vice-chancellor of Jahangirnagar University, Dr. Kazi Shahidul Alam of the Bangladesh Medical Association, Principal Quamruzzaman of the Bangladesh Shikshak Samity, Dr. Mohammad Abdur Razzak of Krishnabid Institution, Prof. Akhtaruzzaman of Bangladesh College-University Teachers Association and Dr. Razib Humayun of Bangabandhu Parishad.

Aussies beat Windies

Star batsman Brian Lara cracked a run-a-ball 45 and Shivnarine Chanderpaul made a career-best 80, but the West Indies faltered when victory appeared well within their grasp.

The West Indies had begun the match on a sensational note by removing the top Australian batsmen, including the in-form Mark Waugh, who went for a second-ball duck to Courtney Ambrose, by the 10th over with just 15 on the board.

Australia were saved from complete disaster by a defiant 138-run partnership for the fifth wicket between Stuart Law (72) and Michael Bevan (69). The pair stayed together till the 42nd over to aid Australia's last-ditch recovery in which 64 runs came off the final 10 overs.

Mark Waugh had struck three centuries from his previous five innings in the tournament and was averaging 118 before Thursday's game.

Ambrose's new-ball partner Ian Bishop, after seeing Taylor dropped by Brian Lara at slip

Norwester likely today

Norwester accompanied by squally wind may hit parts of the country this afternoon, weather expert predicted.

A Met Office expert told UNB yesterday that the prevailing humid weather is likely to be over with the advent of rain immediately after the norwester.

"Before the norwester sweeps the country, there will be an increase of day temperature with rising humidity," he said.

Drug-dealer found dead

The body of a young man bound in a sack was recovered by police in the city's Tejaoga area late Wednesday night.

The body, found in an alley south of the BG Press, bore gunshot wounds in the head and hands.

Tejaoga police identified the victim as Abdul Mannan, aged 30, son of Keramat Ali, a resident of 44 North Degun Bari.

According to them, Mannan, reportedly a drug-dealer, was picked up by some youths from his brother's video shop at Degun Bari earlier in the evening.

BNP suggestions

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come of the President's move unless the February 15 polls were declared null and void. It has been sent after gathering interpretation of the opposition's letters," said the leader requesting for anonymity.

Meanwhile, top BNP leaders at a meeting with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday, also discussed possibility of the President seeking the opinion of the Supreme Court on the formation of a non-party government and the Opposition demand for scrapping of the February 15 election, two contentious issues now blocking the solution of the political impasse.

The meeting held at the PM's Tejaoga office, however, did not take any decision as regards the party's suggestion to the President on a reference to the Supreme Court reference.

Two top BNP leaders Abdus Salam Talukder and Rafiqul Islam Mia met the President yesterday evening at the Bangabhaban. Sources close to the two ministers said they have discussed with the President the latest developments in the context of his initiative for ending the political crisis.

Gunshots on DU campus

By Staff Correspondent

At least 30 rounds of gunshots were fired from two residential halls of Dhaka University yesterday.

The exchange of gunshots between the S M Hall and the Zahurul Huq Hall began at around 3pm.

A group of unidentified persons reportedly first fired a shot from the SM Hall, said a resident student.

Young man shot dead in N'ganj

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Mar 14: A young man was shot dead by some unidentified persons near his house here today, the doctors pronounced him dead when bullet-hit Monir Hossain, 19, was rushed to the Narayanganj Hospital. Monir, son of Abdul Khaleque, resided in a house at West Deobhog Lichubagan area. He was called out of his house by a group of people at around 4:30 am. One hour later, he was found lying on an open field with bullet injury in his head.

Opposition urged to help operate Ctg port soon

CHITTAGONG, Mar 14: Leaders of Chittagong Port Combined Workers-Employees Federation today called upon the opposition political parties to help operate Chittagong port immediately in the greater interest of the nation, reports BSS.

In a statement here tonight, the federation leaders said that about 20,000 workers and employees of the port were ready to resume work, but they could not do because of absence of congenial atmosphere.

They alleged that a vested group had been active to make Chittagong port inoperative. The export oriented industries, including garment factories, have been seriously affected while the national economy has been affected because of non-functioning of the country's main port, they said, adding the government and the Opposition should create a congenial atmosphere for operation of Chittagong port.

Statement by 418 lawyers

Constitution can't be amended by ordn

Some 418 lawyers yesterday said the Constitution could not be amended by promulgating an ordinance to establish a non-party government for holding elections, reports BSS.

In a joint statement, they said the people were being misled by misinterpretation of the Constitution by certain constitutional experts who were giving their opinion using clever tactics. "It would be good for the nation if interpretation of the Constitution is given by properly understanding the Constitution," they said.

The lawyers appealed to both the ruling party and the opposition to resolve the political impasse immediately through discussions on the basis of the Constitution to restore peace and political stability.

The lawyers said it was beyond the powers of the President to promulgate an ordinance to provide for the outline and establishment of a non-party government for holding national elections, and spilling out the powers of the state and the executives during the elections, the role of the election commission, the functions and the role of the

BNP replies

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Briefing newsmen, BNP office secretary Nazrul Islam Khan said earlier, the party had command at a meeting finalised the outline of the proposed non-party government. BNP chairperson and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia presided over the meeting.

Replying to a question, Khan did not spell out the outline of the non-party government but said we have it flexible so that the views of other political parties could be accommodated.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas on March 12 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 outline for formation of a non-party government.

Meanwhile, the BNP reiterated its call to the opposition parties to withdraw their non-cooperation programme for the sake of the peace and the country, Khan said.

BNP trying

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also fail because of the "conspiracy" by the present rulers.

He accused the BNP of engaging "its guns armed with automatic weapons" to crush the opposition campaign.

Nasim said that the "illegal government" was misleading the nation through false propaganda using the radio and television.

Referring to public servants, he said "You are not employees of BNP or Begum Zia... You have responsibilities to the 12 crore people of the country."

The AL leader cautioned that those helping the present government would be identified as "public enemy."

Banking hours not changed: BB

The office hours of Bangladesh Bank and the scheduled banks has not been changed, the Bank said yesterday referring to press reports that banks will remain open from 2 pm to 4 pm, reports UNB.

The press reports followed an opposition announcement that banks would be exempted for two hours from their non-stop non-cooperation programme.

The central bank in a press release said as per the Negotiable Instruments Act 1981, banks are to function from 9 am to 3 pm on weekdays except Thursdays. The banking hour is from 9 am to 12 noon on Thursdays.

Top lawyers

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a caretaker government.

Amirul Islam submitted to the President a draft outline on how he could promulgate an ordinance for caretaker government.

K S Nabi, while talking to this correspondent last night, said, "I told the President that by conceding to the Opposition demand to hold general elections in May, Begum Khaleda Zia herself has admitted that the February 15 polls are illegal."

Referring to different constitutional provisions concerned, I also showed the President that he enjoyed the right to promulgate an ordinance in line with the Opposition demand."

But Justice T H Khan, President of the Supreme Court Bar Association, A R Yousuf and Khandaker Mahbubuddin, who learnt to have argued that the President had unfortunately no power to promulgate an ordinance providing for the formation of a caretaker government.

Noting the President's "limitations," they argued that he could promulgate any ordinance "without altering any provision of the Constitution."

They also said since the Constitution has no provision for a non-party caretaker government, the Parliament elected through February 15 polls could only amend the Constitution to that effect.

They further argued that once the election of the sixth Parliament was declared null and void, the provision for a caretaker government could in no way be incorporated in the Constitution, which would further aggravate the political crisis.

Barrister Ishtiaque Ahmed told the President that he could take an effective step to resolve the crisis provided the parties concerned reach an agreement. However, he could not be reached last night for details information.

Fertiliser

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a group of angry farmers under the banner of Krishak Sangram Samiti attacked the shops and offices at about 11 am and forcibly took away fertilizer.

Police said, they damaged the Co-operative Bank, the social welfare office, Krishi office, Ansar-VDP office, food office and fisheries office. The mob also ransacked two molasses godowns.

Earlier, the farmers forcibly took away 400 bags of urea from local Dakbangla bazar. They also took forcibly 600 bags of urea from Bhatnagar paying Taka 250 per bag only.

IOJ for interim advisory council headed by CJ

The Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) has suggested that an interim advisory council be formed by the President for the period between resignation of the present cabinet and elections of the new parliament, reports UNB.

The Jote submitted the outline to President Abdur Rahman Biswas in response to his letters requesting various political parties, to send proposals on the framework and modalities of a neutral caretaker government. The President's office said yesterday.

According to the IOJ outline, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court or the next Judge in order of seniority would be appointed the principal adviser.

He would perform this responsibility in addition to his own duty and would return to his post after the elected Prime Minister takes over.

The President would appoint members of the advisory council after consultations with the principal adviser. These members would not be associated with any political party. The principal adviser and the advisory council would enjoy the rank and status of the prime minister and the council of ministers respectively on a temporary basis.

The advisory council would only administer day to day routine affairs and urgent matters of the government. It would not take any long-term policy decision.

Women's seats

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March 18 has been fixed for withdrawal of candidature. Voting for the indirect elections will take place on March 19 from 9 am to 5 pm.

The EC in separate gazette notification has appointed Mohammad Abdus Salam, Joint Secretary of the EC Secretariat, Returning Officer for conducting election to the 30 seats.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has invited applications from interested candidates for the Jatuya Sangsad's 30 women seats.

Dr M Zahir

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will merely fill up a void.

On the Presidential power to promulgate an Ordinance providing for a caretaker government, Dr Zahir gave a formula on way out in August last year, said Article 48 (2) of the Constitution provides that the President may exercise the powers and perform duties conferred and imposed on him. A law framed under the said Article would be a special law because the Constitution itself contemplates giving additional powers to the President.

"The Ordinance is only to fill in the gap now. A permanent shape can be given after a thorough discussion by all parties in a universally accepted Parliament," he added.

On the Sixth Parliament, the jurist said the election of the February 15 can not be termed an election within the meaning of the Constitution because of the total non-concern of the majority of the norms of the fair election in the vast majority of the polling centres as reported in the press."

He, however, said the Constitution provides only one method of challenging an unfair election, as provided in Article 125, where the modus operandi is by way of an election petition to an authority, prescribed by law.

Obviously, this is now impracticable in the present circumstances. The only way the government can show any respect for the true spirit of democracy is to dissolve this still-born Parliament immediately. The dissolution is certainly possible under the Constitution," he observed.