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Notice
As we have been facing an acute shortage of newsprint, we have no way but to bring down the 12-page volume of our paper to an 8-page one. We will revert to our normal volume as soon as the newsprint supply position improves. We regret the inconvenience and hope our valued readers and patrons would bear with us.
— Management

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NEWS BRIEFS
Audit reports submitted
Comptroller and Auditor General KM Hussain presented annual audit reports, finance accounts and appropriation accounts to President Abdur Rahman Biswas at Bangabhaban yesterday. Accepting the reports, President Biswas expressed his satisfaction and thanked the Comptroller and Auditor General for submission of the reports in time. He said that public expenditure should be controlled and kept within the budgetary allocations, reports BSS.

Gayoom greets Khaleda
The President of the Maldives, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, yesterday congratulated Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on her assumption of the office of Prime Minister for second consecutive term. In a message sent to Begum Zia, President Gayoom congratulated the Prime Minister on his own behalf as well as on behalf of the government and people of his country.

Rail engine damaged
KISHOREGANJ, Mar 21: Opposition activists damaged the engine and four bogies of a Mymensingh-bound train from Dhaka at Kishoreganj railway station today, reports UNB. The unruly activists also assaulted the train driver and a guard and took away the key of the engine, railway officials said.

5 Unicef workers kidnapped in Somalia
MOGADISHU, Mar 21: Gunmen today kidnapped five foreigners working for UN agencies in Somalia, witnesses said. The five were taken hostage by the gunmen after a brief, heated argument between the assailants and militiamen stationed at Ballidogee airport some 100 kilometres west of the Somali capital. Four of those taken were working for the UN Children's Fund (Unicef). The fifth was the World Health Organisation's top official in Somalia, reports AFP.

Caretaker govt bill placed in JS

By Staff Correspondent
The ruling BNP yesterday introduced in Parliament a bill seeking constitutional provisions for a non-party caretaker government primarily to aid and assist the Election Commission (EC) for holding general elections peacefully, fairly and impartially.
Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Jamiruddin Sircar moved the bill — the Constitution (Thirteenth Amendment) Bill, 1996 — in the House.
The non-party caretaker government shall consist of Chief Adviser as its head and not more than ten other advisers, the bill said.
The Chief Adviser would preferably be "a person who among the retired Chief Justices of Bangladesh retired last."
The Chief Adviser would enjoy the status and privileges of Prime Minister and the advisers that of minister.
If the immediate past Chief Justice declines to head the caretaker government, the President would appoint the Chief Justice who retired just before him. If he also is not available, the last retired judge of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court would be appointed and in case he is not available, the Appellate Division Judge who retired just before him would be appointed Chief Adviser, the proposed law said.
In case of non-availability of the said persons, the President will appoint "an eminent citizen" who is qualified to be an adviser as Chief Adviser, it added.
The executive power of the state "shall be exercised by or on the authority of the Chief Adviser in accordance with the advice of the non-party caretaker government," the bill said.
The Chief Adviser and other advisers shall be appointed by the President "within fifteen days after Parliament is dissolved or stands dissolved."
The general elections of Members of Parliament shall be held within ninety days after Parliament is dissolved, the bill mentioned.
During the period between dissolution of Parliament and formation of the caretaker government, the Prime Minister, ministers, state Ministers and deputy ministers would discharge the duties and functions of their respective offices.
The non-party caretaker government shall "stand dissolved" as soon as "the new Prime Minister enters his office after the reconstitution of Parliament," it said.
Apart from giving aid and assistance to the EC in conducting national polls, the caretaker government "shall carry on normal functions" of the state "with the aid and assistance of persons in the services of the Republic."
But the caretaker administration "shall not make any policy decision," the bill categorically said.
Describing the qualifications head for being advisers, the bill said, a) an adviser must be qualified for election as



A devastating fire gutted a large number of shanties at Begunbari in Tejgaon area of the city last night. — Star photo

Caretaker govt thru illegal JS to worsen crisis: Opposition

By Staff Correspondent
The mainstream Opposition said yesterday any attempt to install a caretaker government through "illegal parliament" would further aggravate the present political crisis.
Briefing newsmen on behalf of the Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami, AL Organising Secretary Mohammad Nasim said the people would never accept any law formulated by present parliament.
Without referring to tabling of the caretaker government bill by the ruling BNP in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday, he said that the government had accepted the demand for a caretaker government in the face of an intense campaign launched by the opposition political parties.
To resolve the crisis, the President should seek advice from the Supreme Court under Article 106 of the Constitution on the formation of a caretaker government as proposed by the Opposition, rather than

Inside Jatiya Sangsad

By Nazmul Ashraf
Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Jamiruddin Sircar once again caused laughter in the House yesterday by making a reference to his mispronunciation of the year 1996 in Bangla on the opening day of the sixth Jatiya Sangsad.
While tabling the caretaker government bill, Sircar strongly and perfectly pronounced 1996 in Bangla, 'Honourable Speaker, it is 'chhianaboli' (ইং, not চিনিয়াবলি), he pointed out.
Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali, to have fun out of the issue, requested the Law Minister to repeat his statement.
"On that day, I pronounced it 'chhianaboli' but my colleagues (in the House) wrongly heard me saying 'chhianaboli', the minister replied.
A treasury bench member, Fazlur Rahman Sultan, strongly protested a statement by another MP of his party, Prof. Shaheedul Islam who told the House that the then Major Ziaur Rahman proclaimed the country's independence in

Hasina's call to shift SSC exams for 2 weeks

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the authorities concerned to shift the upcoming SSC examination for two weeks because of the current crisis in national life, reports UNB.
The SSC examination under five education boards of the country is scheduled to begin on March 28.
In a statement, Hasina said she was equally concerned with guardians, students and teachers, and has doubts about the smooth holding of the SSC examination in view of the prevailing unstable situation in the country.
This is why I am requesting the authorities to shift the examination for two weeks." She said the nation is in a deep crisis due to "obstinacy and lust for power of the illegal, autocratic government."
The Awami League chief said they were always sincere about the students' safe participation in the SSC examination, but the illegal government was pushing the country towards clash, conflict and destruction by ignoring the people's demand.

Clashes, blasts in city Three killed during non-cooperation

By Staff Correspondent
Three persons were killed and about 50 injured in sporadic clashes and bomb explosions in different areas of the city on the 13th day of the opposition's non-cooperation programme yesterday.
Two passengers of a tempo died as it overturned while trying to avert a bomb attack by some pickets in front of Khanbari at Farmgate at about 12.30 pm.
Witnesses said that pickets created panic in Farmgate area by exploding home-made bombs. When they exploded a bomb in front of a tempo, the driver lost control of the vehicle and it overturned.
Solaiman, 32, a cashier of Janata Bank, Rajarbagh, died on the spot and fatally injured Narayan Rang Darh, 35, died later at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).
Din Mohammad Dilu, 22, worker of a tailoring shop at Rayerbazar, was shot dead in a clash between supporters of the BNP and Awami League late Wednesday night at

Fire destroys 900 shanties at Begunbari

By Staff Correspondent
A fire gutted some 900 shanties at Begunbari leaving several thousand people homeless last night, the second such devastating fire in the city within a span of 36 hours.
The fire left at least 15 people injured of whom three were hospitalised, according to witnesses and Dhaka Medical College Hospital sources.
Firefighters using 13 engines from different fire station in the city took around four hours to extinguish the fire which started at about 9 pm.
Incidents of casualty was not known immediately, although wailing mothers were seen desperately looking for their children.
Firefighters and police, besides the local volunteers, could not confirm any casualty till filing of this report late last night.
In the fire at Islambagh on Wednesday noon, a three-year old child was killed and 1500 shanties were destroyed.
The Begunbari slum located behind the Polytechnic Institute in Tejgaon, was seen — See Page 8 Col 6.



Army escorting some trucks carrying foodstuff in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Three killed, 50 hurt in N'ganj clashes

NARAYANGANJ, Mar 21: Three people have been killed and 50 injured, 10 with bullets, in violent clashes in the town and outside since Wednesday night, reports UNB.
Police gave the identity of the dead as Mohammad Ali, 20, a rickshawpuller of Siddhirganj, Manik Chandra Barman, 16, of Deobhog area in sadar thana and Masud Rana, 14, of Pagla in Fotullah thana.
They said, Mohammad Ali and 10 others of Jatiya Sramik League came under an attack allegedly by henchmen of a Union Parishad Chairman at Chittagong Road crossing at 10:30 today when they brought out an anti-government procession.
Mohammad Ali succumbed to his bullet wounds at Sadar Hospital while five of the injured were taken to Dhaka in critical condition.

Two MPs roughed up near Sectt

By Staff Correspondent
Two members of parliament were assaulted by Opposition activists in front of the Jatiya Press Club while another MP was chased away yesterday noon.
Prof Rezaul Karim, MP of Narayanganj, Major Shahjahan Omar (rtd), MP of Jhalakathi and Babul Kazi, MP of Pirozpur were leaving the Secretariat when a group of Opposition activists recognised them and stopped their rickshaw near the Jatiya Press Club at around 1:30 pm.
Sensing trouble the three MPs ran towards the other side of the road. But the activists caught Rezaul Karim and Maj Shahjahan Omar (rtd) on Segunbagicha Road behind the foreign ministry.
They roughed up Rezaul Karim and took his shirt and shoes away.
Rezaul, who received head injury, later took shelter in a nearby office. Maj Shahjahan (rtd), who received minor injuries, was rescued by police on duty.
The third MP, Babul Kazi, however, escaped unhurt.
Police later rescued Rezaul from an office in front of Press Club. His blood-stained clothes were also recovered by police.

Slowdown in trade to raise bad debts, fear bankers

By R M Titumir and Inam Ahmed
A virtual collapse of the trade cycle caused by the ongoing political impasse has rendered many businessmen unable to repay their bank loans.
Bankers now fear that the slowdown in trade would increase the bad debts of the banks while their operational profits would also dwindle alarmingly as commercial transactions are at a standstill.
The work stoppage has snapped the trade cycle, opening of letters of credit (LCs) has fallen at least by 50 per cent affecting our commission earning, said the managing director of a private sector bank.
Referring to the breakdown in the trade cycle, another banker said: "In case of imports, after opening of letters of credit, the importers are affected due to problems in cargo handling and delivery. Foreign ships are declining to come to Bangladesh due to the inoperation of the port, and goods are piled up at ports as the Opposition has enforced people's curfew."
Those who somehow manage to unload their imported items, can not sell them. Even if they manage to sell their goods, they can not realise the sales proceeds as bank transactions are restricted," he added.
Another banker, working in the credit division of a private bank, said: "Because of the break down of the trade cycle, the importers are forced to ask the banks concerned to extend their loan repayment period. In turn, this gives birth to the break down of the repayment cycle, generating bad debt and unnecessary provisioning."
In case of back-to-back LCs for the garments sector, the bankers said they were forced to create loans on their customers accounts and pay dues of the suppliers of raw materials, mainly fabrics and accessories, to the beneficiary overseas banks since the garments exporters are failing to ship their goods.
The garments exporters have opened import LCs after receiving master LCs from the buyers. But now they are facing serious problems in settling import liabilities due to non-availability of export proceeds. So, to avoid black-listing, the local banks are repaying the foreign banks by creating forced loans in the exporters' name," said a correspondent — See Page 8 Col 8.

10pc customs duty rebate on imported goods

The government to provide relief to the importers hit hard by the Opposition's non-cooperation, awarded 10 per cent customs duty rebate on all imported goods to be released from ports by March 31.
National Board of Revenue (NBR) issued a notification to this effect yesterday, official sources told UNB.
All other applicable duties and taxes, including VAT and supplementary duty, will remain unchanged.
Goods, duty on which was assessed before but remained undelivered, will also come under the waiver.
Sources, however, said the concession was contingent upon actual physical removal of goods from the ports — sea, air and land ports.
The concession is only a temporary one and will expire after March 31, sources added.
Apart from compensating importers for business losses, — See Page 8 Col 2.

3 murdered, 8 hurt in city incidents

By DMCH Correspondent
Three persons, including a housewife, were murdered and eight others injured in separate incidents in the city yesterday.
An unidentified male, aged around 30, was found dead with deep cut injuries in his body near Bottola in Bashundhara under Cantonment thana yesterday morning.
Cantonment police recovered the body at about 10:30 am and sent it to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for autopsy, medical sources said.
Banju Begum, 20, was hanged to death by an unidentified gang in her house at a slum at Mohakhali late Wednesday night.
Police picked up Banu's husband, Baharuddin, for interrogation. The motive behind the killing and the persons involved in the murder could not be known till last night.
Meanwhile, a businessman, Monir Hossain, 26, who was fatally injured by a gang of extortionists at Jurain last Sunday, died at the DMCH early yesterday.
The gang attacked and fatally wounded Monir, a nut and bolt trader, as he refused to give a toll of Tk 50,000, locals who rushed him to the hospital said.
The armed bullies called Monir, son of Alek Chand of Medical Road, Jurain, from his house at about 1 am Sunday. He was found lying unconscious in a pool of blood.
In another incident, three brothers and their employee were injured when a group of muslimen attacked them at West Kafurli yesterday evening.
The victims Abbas Uddin (42) Director and Ismail Khan (40) Managing Director of the Era Apparels, their younger — See Page 8 Col 7.

Sectt employees demand removal of Amanullah

By Staff Correspondent
Agitating employees at a rally inside the Secretariat yesterday demanded removal of the newly appointed State Minister for Education, by tomorrow.
The employees threatened to announce a greater programme on Sunday to make the Secretariat inoperative.
They were protesting the assault incident on a fellow employee allegedly by some JCD activists who came to see State Minister Amanullah Aman on Wednesday.
Several hundred government employees brought out a big procession and later held a rally inside the Secretariat — See Page 8 Col 2.