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**NEWS BRIEFS**

**BNPPP meets today**

An emergency meeting of the BNPP Parliamentary Party will be held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban today at 7 pm. All BNPP MPs have been requested to attend the meeting at the Committee Room No 1 on the ground floor, East Block, reports UNB.

**World Meteorology Day today**

World Meteorology Day will be observed today. Bangladesh Meteorological Department has drawn up an elaborate programme to observe the day. The day's programmes include an inaugural function followed by a technical seminar in Dhaka, reports BSS.

**One chopped to death in Jhenidah**

From Our Correspondent  
JHENIDAH, Mar 22: One person was chopped to death in Kotchandpur thana of the district by a group of unidentified men last night. About 15 armed men stormed into the house of Abul Kashem, 32, of village Shopabila and killed him.

**JCD-BCL clash in Sirajganj**

SIRAJGANJ, Mar 22: At least 15 students were injured in a clash between the Jatiya-tabadh Chhatra Dal (JCD) and pro-Awami League Chhatra League (BCL) at Kantonagar High School in Kazipur thana today. Witnesses said, the clash erupted over a farewell ceremony accorded to the SSC examinees at about 10 am, reports UNB.

**N Korea appeals for int'l help**

GENEVA, Mar 22: North Korea had issued a new appeal for international help to deal with a serious food shortage following the worst floods in its history, the International Red Cross said here today. Pyongyang's request was relayed to the International Federation of Red Cross Societies which has appealed for more than seven million Swiss francs (nearly six million dollars) for the worst affected people, reports AFP.

**Fire at garments factory in city**

By Staff Correspondent  
A fire broke out at a garments factory in Tejgaon industrial area in the city yesterday. Fire fighters from Tejgaon station took about an hour to extinguish the blaze that reportedly burned some sewing machines and garments. The fire which started at about 8 am on the first floor of the factory, had originated reportedly from an electrical short circuit, fire brigade sources said.



A welcome shower in the city yesterday afternoon. — Star photo

**Season's first nor'wester, welcome shower**

By Staff Correspondent  
The season's first nor'wester swept through the city yesterday afternoon followed by a welcome shower, much to the relief of the city dwellers. The Met office recorded 7 mm rainfall in the city. There were also rainfall in Faridpur (21 mm) and Sylhet (2 mm) yesterday. The shower that lasted about half an hour temporarily relieved the city dwellers from a sultry weather. Children were seen dancing and rejoicing on the streets at Kakrail, Baily Road, Green Road, Mahakhali and at some other places. The Met office also forecast rain in the city today. The city's maximum temperature yesterday was 35.0 degree Celsius and the minimum 25.3 degrees while the humidity was 82 per cent in the morning and 75 per cent in the evening.  
See Page 8 Col 3

**BNP likely to amend bill Chief Adviser may be empowered to appoint advisers**

By Nazmul Ashraf  
The ruling BNP is likely to propose amendments to the non-party caretaker government bill it has introduced in Parliament, an authoritative source told The Daily Star last night. The amendments regarding the President's powers to appoint and remove the advisers comprising the caretaker government are expected to be moved soon in the house, said an influential minister. Elaborating, he said the first amendment might propose that the Chief Adviser, after being appointed by the President, would appoint all the advisers in consultation with the quarters concerned. The bill has originally proposed that the advisers will be appointed by the President in consultation with the Chief Adviser. The second amendment may suggest curtailing the President's powers to remove the Chief Adviser or an Adviser if, in his opinion, they have ceased to be qualified to be appointed as such. The amendments are being planned following suggestions from top opposition leaders contacted by the BNP on the caretaker bill, according to the BNP leader. Another influential minister, who is now in touch with the opposition leaders, said, "They seem to have no other objection to the structure and powers of the caretaker government."  
See Page 8 Col 2

**Opposition plans changes in non-cooperation programme**

By Staff Correspondent  
The on-going non-cooperation programme may undergo some changes in the nature while keeping up its intensity, according to highly placed sources in the Opposition here yesterday. A senior Opposition leader, who spoke to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity, said that the Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami were actively considering "changes" in the programme. He said that the non-cooperation programme could be retained with some more relaxations considering the plight of the people. The possible "changes" in the programme and some "options" will be discussed at separate meetings of the three major Opposition parties. The programme will be finalised at a joint meeting "in a day or two", he said. The AL, JP and Jamaat last night announced fresh relaxations keeping movement of food and other perishable items out of the purview of the non-cooperation for 12 hours beginning 5 pm. An AL leader, who declined to be named, said that there was a strong possibility that the non-cooperation could be suspended for March 26 and following two days. The AL leader said they were also considering the option of strongly enforcing the non-cooperation programme from morning until the afternoon. Rickshaws might not be allowed during the period, he hinted.

**Commentary**  
**Plea for ref on referendum**

By Mahfuz Anam  
The Opposition is restive and wants a caretaker government in place at this very moment. The ruling party seems conscious of the urgency and, to its credit, has taken quick action to place the bill for a caretaker government before the Parliament. And yet, everything can get lost in a quagmire of suspicion, hatred and impatience. Standing between the Opposition's wish to have a caretaker government instituted immediately, and the ruling party's wish to expedite the process stands a constitutional formality — that of holding a referendum before the Bill can be incorporated into the Constitution and made a law. While we are fully cognizant of the constitutional obligation, we are at the same time extremely worried as to what may happen between now and the time needed to complete the referendum, put the caretaker government into place, and have Begum Zia's cabinet hand over power to it. Since time is of critical importance at the moment, we would like to ask if it is at all possible for the President, at the request of the Prime Minister, to make a reference to the Supreme Court as to the possibility of either doing away with the referendum on this occasion, or postponing it till a later date. The reasons for seeking such a reference are, in our view, compelling. 1. The Caretaker Amendment Bill reflects the wish of all the political parties and groups who were part of the 5th Parliament. In addition, this Bill has the endorsement of all sections of the society — professionals, intellectuals, workers, NGOs, students, women's organisations etc. Conversely put, we have not had a single organisation of any kind which is on record to have opposed the ideas contained in the Bill. 2. Given the extreme suspicion on both sides of the political divide, and being fully aware of the highly volatile and explosive situation that marks the present political situation, it is quite possible that holding a referendum may lead to unnecessary loss of lives, further violence and political clashes, and to more disruption of civic and economic life of the nation. 3. Holding a referendum is logistically a highly involved process. Given our experience with the February 15 election, we think it will be extremely difficult to hold. 4. The Election Commission, which will organise the referendum is in shambles, with its credibility at an all time low. A referendum held by it may not be acceptable to the Opposition, and lack universal credibility. 5. Referendum will involve additional cost to the national exchequer which we can ill afford at this time. We make the suggestion of a Presidential reference, on PM's request, to the Supreme Court to assume that the referendum will only reinforce something which is already universally known, and therefore to waive it for this particular occasion, or to postpone it temporarily, may not prejudice anything.  
See page 2 col 3

**BNP trying to shift blame on army, says Hasina**

Awami League president Sheikh Hasina expressed concern over the use of the patriotic armed forces by present 'illegal' government to cling to power, tarnishing the image and honour of the army, reports UNB. "The nation does not want that the members of the armed forces be used to protect the chair of an illegal government and a particular party," she said in a statement yesterday. The Awami League chief said when people had launched an about non-cooperation movement against the government, the BNP being isolated from the people, was trying to shift the responsibility of its misdeed on the army. Hasina called on the armed forces to stand beside the people to show respect to their legitimate demand and opinion instead of confronting with them. She said the government also placed army against the people before the February 15 one-party farcical election and used them in the so-called electoral process in the name of arms recovery.  
See Page 8 Col 3

**Fierce gunbattle at N'ganj JCD leader killed, over 100 hurt**

From Our Correspondent  
NARAYANGANJ, Mar 22: A local JCD leader was shot dead and more than one hundred people including two women and a police constable were injured in a fierce gunbattle between the Opposition and ruling party activists at Chashara in the town today. Masudur Rahman Anik, 25, acting general secretary of Narayanganj College Chhatra Sangsad died on the spot after he was shot in the chest and throat during the hour-long gun-battle that began at about 2 pm. Of the injured persons, fifteen were admitted to different local hospitals and clinics with serious bullet injury. They were: Shahid 22, Wazed Ali Khokan 35, Zafar 22, Tuhin 20, Delwar Hossen 22, Jewel 24, Shawpon 24, Kamoni Begum 30, Jahangir 20, Shah Alam 20, Halima Begum 20 and Police Constable Abdur Rahman 32, Belal Ahmed 18. Two others, Belal Ahmed Khokan 32 and Shawkat Osman Shaku 27 were taken to Orthopaedic Hospital in Dhaka in critical conditions. The clash started when a mourning procession by Awami League and Jatiya Party workers with the body of Munir who was reportedly killed in an incident on the previous day reached the President Road crossing after the namaz-e-janaja of Munir. Witnesses said some of the processionists chased some ruling party activists who gathered there. This led to the clashes. The clash spread to Bangabandhu Road, Chashara Square, Ranitrishtia Masjid Road and Chashara Rail Gate area. More than one hundred gun shots were fired and about 1000 crackers and hand bombs exploded. The clash continued till about 3 pm. The groups used cut rifles, SMG, Pistol, Revolvers and other modern weapons during the clash. Police taking position at the Shahid Zia Hall and on the roof of Shantana Super Market fired shots and tear gas shells and dispersed the clashing groups.  
See Page 8 Col 3

**Exemptions**

The Awami League has exempted several public utility services, including movement of vehicles, from the non-cooperation programme, reports UNB. A press release of the party yesterday said banks would remain open from 1 pm to 4 pm and autorickshaw and tempo will ply from 3 pm to 5 in the next morning. The vehicles carrying rice, vegetables, fish, meat, egg, milk, fruits and other perishable items will remain outside the programme from 5 pm to 5 in the next morning. However, the vehicles have been advised to hang banner inscribing the name of item. The release said all shops would remain open from 3 pm to 10 pm and the export-oriented garments factories from 4 pm to 5 in the next morning. Besides, hospitals, ambulances, medicine shops, vegetable markets, fire brigades, fertiliser trucks and fuel tank lorries, vehicles of city corporations and transports of journalists and newspaper would remain outside the programme.

**Prices of food items continue to rise**

Star Report  
As the Opposition's non-cooperation programme enters its third week today, prices of many food items including rice, tinned milk, edible oil and sugar have risen sharply in the city markets and traders fear that the hike will continue. Food items, except fish and fresh vegetable, have registered a significant rise over the last two weeks. Traders at the Swarighat wholesale fish market were selling medium sized rui or kalia for Tk 60 to 70 per kg, a big sized hilsa cost about Tk 70, small rui cost between Tk 30 to 35 per kg while the prices of ayf and boal were around Tk 100 per kg. Traders at Swarighat said that the supply of fish was normal, through the waterways, but the city retailers did not turn up in their usual number. In the city's kitchen markets, however, the asking price of a big sized hilsa was between Tk 140 to 170 while other types of fish cost at least 50 per cent more than in the wholesale markets. In the kitchen markets, prices of fresh vegetable remained more or less the same as compared to that before the non-cooperation programme started. The age-old water transport system has kept the supply normal these days, traders said. Rice Prices of all varieties of rice have risen by Tk 100 or more per maund in the wholesale market as compared to that in the first week of the non-cooperation programme. The difference between the present prices of rice and those before the non-cooperation programme started is not less than Tk 200 per maund in the wholesale markets. At the Badamtali and Babubazar wholesale markets price of Pajjam (good quality) has risen to Tk 18.75 per kg from Tk 14.46, that of Aman (coarse) to Tk 14.20 from Tk 11.65 moam palish (imported rice) to Tk 15.80 from Tk 13.12 nazir shailo to Tk 18.75 from Tk 14.73 and kataribhog Tk 24.11 from Tk 21.43. The retailers at different city markets charge Tk 1 to 3 per kg on top of the wholesale price.  
See Page 8 Col 8

**14th day of non-cooperation Two more die in city**

By Staff Correspondent  
One person was killed and another succumbed to injuries on the 14th day yesterday of the Opposition's non-cooperation programme. An unidentified man aged about 20 was crushed under the wheels of an autorickshaw on the Biswa Road at Gopibagh as the three-wheeler was chased by some pickets. He was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), where doctors declared him dead. Habib, 40, who was fatally injured when a bus, chased by pickets at Syedabad on Wednesday hit him, succumbed to his injuries early yesterday, reports our DMCH correspondent. Besides, five people were wounded in the programme-related incidents at various places in the metropolis while army personnel handed over four persons to police on charge of exploding bombs. The owner and three employees of a bakery shop were injured when some opposition activists allegedly attacked them for keeping the shop open.  
See Page 8 Col 1



Army patrolling Paltan area in the city yesterday. — Star photo

**Train attacked, rail tracks uprooted**

Bangladesh Railway yesterday Operated its inter-city trains between Dhaka and Chittagong for the first time since March 9 as the opposition's indefinite non-cooperation programme stepped into its 14th day, reports UNB. Four inter-city trains plied between the capital and the port city, railway sources said. Two goods trains also left Chittagong for Dhaka in the morning. Some 10 trains left Kamalapur Station for Chittagong and Mymensingh while four, including two inter-city trains, reached Dhaka from Chittagong. In all, seven trains left Chittagong for different destinations, the sources said. The trains which left Kamalapur for Mymensingh, however, could not reach their destinations as opposition activists put up barricades in between Gachhihata and Kishoreganj and in Sutakhal. UNB Correspondent from Kishoreganj said pickets uprooted about 200 feet rail tracks near Kishoreganj Textile Mills in the early hours. The rail line could not be restored till late evening. A Mymensingh-bound local train came under attack of opposition last night.  
See Page 8 Col 1

**'Mad cow' disease scares European beef lovers**

LONDON, Mar 22: Britain's mad cow disease scare threatens the destruction of its beef industry and yet another standoff with European Union partners, reports Reuters. France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden and Portugal all banned imports of British beef after scientists said they had discovered a likely link between mad cow disease, Germany called for a Europe-wide ban on British beef. The discovery that 10 young Britons had died of a new strain of Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD), the human form of mad cow disease, possibly caught from eating infected beef, sparked panic across Europe. Beef cattle prices slumped 15 per cent on British markets, supermarkets and fast food restaurants struggled to allay near hysteria among consumers and many British schools banned beef from their canteens. Health Minister Stephen Dorrell fanned public disquiet by saying Britain's 11 million cattle might be slaughtered to stop the disease. Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in its tracks, although agriculture minister Douglas Hogg later seemed to play down the possibility. Experts said the slaughter could cost the government 20 billion pounds (30.76 billion dollars) in compensation. "It's certainly not a recommendation but it's one of the options that's open," Dorrell said. European Commission president Jacques Santer said the decision by the five EU countries to ban British beef was a normal response to the new evidence. Britain, fighting a losing battle to convince consumers that its beef was safe to eat, said the ban was probably illegal.  
See Page 8 Col 7

**No cargo handling yet at Ctg port**

From Staff Correspondent  
CHITTAGONG, Mar 22: Cargo handling and delivery of goods could not resume at Chittagong Port today despite efforts by the State Minister for Port and Shipping Shahjahan Siraj. The minister arrived here today and held meeting with port officials and users urging them to carry on their duties, port sources said. The sailing of 53 stuck-up cargo vessels at Chittagong port still remained uncertain, port sources said. But port officials informed that partial cargo handling had resumed in a foodgrain ship and delivery of those unloaded foodgrains was made by some trucks. The navy personnel were on duty.  
See Page 8 Col 2

**Clashes, bomb blasts in Ctg: 10 injured**

From Staff Correspondent  
CHITTAGONG, Mar 22: At least 10 people were injured in sporadic bomb explosions in the city today. A truck helper — Helal Uddin (18) — lost his right hand and driver Din Mohammad (35) received bomb injuries. The truck driver and his assistant came under a bomb attack at Strand Road near the Rashid building when carrying fertilizer this evening. A powerful crude bomb was hurled at the truck, police said. Jafar Hossain Dalim (17) received bomb injuries during bomb blasts in the port area this afternoon. He was sent to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital. A rally organised in the port area by Awami League this afternoon ended amid bomb blasts by rival activists. The Awami League blamed the activists of the BNP for the attack on its rally. During the clash, a BNP office was ransacked and the BNP blamed the activists of Awami League for the attack on its office. The army personnel deployed in the city took positions at all important points and were patrolling the city roads. The autorickshaws and tempos plied in the city and its surrounding areas from 2 to 5 pm.  
See Page 8 Col 7

**Edn Ministry meet on SSC, Dakhil exams today**

The Education Ministry will hold a meeting today at 10 am to discuss the forthcoming Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Dakhil 1996 examinations at the ministry with Education Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah in the chair, reports BSS. An official press release said the representatives of ministries concerned, offices, directors, education boards and heads of different government and private educational institutions in Dhaka will attend the meeting. The heads of different teachers' association have been invited to attend the meeting to share their opinion.