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Announcement

World Cup Quiz-2
Bumper Round closes
today.
Draw will be held very
soon.

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NEWS BRIEFS

Another Bill placed in JS
A bill seeking a 10 per cent raise in salaries of the chairman and members of Bangladesh Public Service Commission was introduced in Parliament yesterday. State Minister for Establishment Barrister Aminul Haq tabled the Members of the Bangladesh Public Service Commission (Terms and Conditions of Service) (Amendment) Bill 1996. It replaces an ordinance promulgated on January 18 this year by the President to raise the salaries by 10 per cent with effect from January 1995, reports UNB.

Independence Day Award
The Independence Day Award distribution ceremony will be held at the International Conference Centre instead of Osmani Memorial Hall today at 11:30 am. Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will attend the function as chief guest and distribute awards, reports UNB.

Sec 144 in Habiganj town
HABIGANJ, Mar 24: Section 144 was imposed on the town today following a clash between ruling party and opposition activists that left 20 people injured, two with bullet. Police and witnesses said the clash erupted when a BNP procession confronted opposition activists at Tinkona Pakur Par in the town at about 5 pm. The two groups exploded nearly a hundred home-made bombs and fired several gunshots. Police lobbed 20 teargas shells to disperse the feuding groups, reports UNB.

IA flight cancelled
CALCUTTA, Mar 24: Indian Airlines (IA) has cancelled its flight on the Calcutta-Chittagong-Calcutta sector tomorrow, press reports said here today, reports PTI.

Relief sought for flood victims
The government was urged yesterday to provide immediate relief to the flood-affected people of Kishoreganj district. Moving a call attention notice at the Jatiya Sangsad, Emdad Ull Haq (Kishoreganj-5) said an untimely flood has seriously affected the Boro crops in Ashtragam, Itna and Mithamgon thanas of the district, reports BSS.

Sit-in near Sectt continues despite Police-BDR action

By Staff Correspondent

The sit-in in front of the Jatiya Press Club, called by the Dhaka city mayor, continued yesterday despite repeated actions by the law enforcing agencies to disperse the demonstrators.

In the evening, Mayor Mohammad Hanif called a dawn-to-dusk hartal in the city today protesting the police-BDR action and declared a break in the sit-in from 12 midnight last night to 6 am to make the hartal successful.

The sit-in will continue till fall of the "illegal" government, he asserted.

Huge contingents of riot police and paramilitary BDR in a sloop at around 6:30 am partially dismantled the temporary stage at the sit-in venue

and fired tear gas shells and rubber bullets while many of the participants were asleep.

The police action came without any provocation, the organisers claimed. The demonstrators dispersed but some leaders including Awami League leaders Matiya Chowdhury and Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya continued the sit-in. The demonstrators regrouped and chase and counter-chase ensued. Intermittent chase and counter-chase continued till about noon during which police lobbed tear gas shells and resorted to baton charge. The demonstrators hurled brickbats and exploded bombs and crackers. At least 12 people were injured in the incidents and a

police sergeants Anwarul Karim was severely beaten by mob in front of the hotel Samrat at the Tophkhana Road at about 7 pm. He was taken to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH).

Press photographer Saifur of Banglar Baani was also injured during the chase and counter-chase. He was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Dhaka city Mayor Mohammad Hanif had called the sit-in from a huge citizens' rally at the venue Saturday evening and declared that it would continue till the fall of the "illegal" government.

The organisers said the action by the law enforcing agencies came after Hanif and some

other leaders had left the venue for Fazz prayers.

Following the morning sloop, police and BDR forces set up a strong security-net around the Press Club and Secretariat. But people in groups sneaked into the sit-in venue with every passing hour and joined the demonstration.

Huge contingent of police, BDR and Army, posted in and around the Secretariat since early morning, sealed off all entry points towards the Secretariat building. A three tier security ring and barbed-wire fences were put up on roads leading to the area.

Thousands of people again gathered in front of the National Press Club in the

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Move to resume operation at Ctg port fails

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Mar 24: A move, agreed at a joint meeting of opposition leaders, port users and officials today, to resume partial operation of the Chittagong port from March 27, failed at the last moment following intervention by the State Minister for Port and Shipping.

The joint meeting was held at a local hotel in Agrabad commercial area.

After a marathon discussion on resumption of port activities from 10 am to 4 pm, the meeting decided to relax the non-cooperation programme for three days beginning from March 27, inside the port for allowing cargo handling as per advice of the All-Party Action

Committee.

The decision was instantly welcomed by the port officials. Opposition leaders and port users present at the meeting.

But the decision could not be turned into a joint agreement after State Minister for Port and Shipping Shahjahan Siraj issued a telephonic instruction barring the Chittagong Port Authority Chairman to sign any such agreement.

Consequently, it caused frustration among both opposition leaders, port officials and the users as resumption of port operations again fell into uncertainty. The joint meeting was convened by the Chittagong Port Authority today after being authorised by

the ministry of shipping and port.

When asked by the newsmen at the meeting venue, acting chairman of CPA Captain Zahiruddin Mahmud admitted that he was asked by the minister at 5:30 pm over telephone not to sign the agreement reached at the joint meeting with the Opposition leaders.

For that reason he was unable to sign anything here, the acting chairman said.

He added that the minister had asked him to send the decisions to him in Dhaka.

In reply to a question, he said "Though I was empowered to hold a joint meeting but I

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Dawn-to-dusk hartal in city today

By Staff Correspondent

Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation Mohammad Hanif has called a dawn-to-dusk hartal in Dhaka city today protesting the police assault on a citizen's sit-in near the Secretariat Sunday.

The Chairman of Tongi Municipality Ajmat Ullah has also called a day-long hartal in the industrial city today.

The mayor gave the call on advise from Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina. AL's opposition partners - Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami - supported the hartal call.

A statement from the party last night said that the hartal would be observed in the capital to protest the attack, shootout and teargassing on the peaceful people staging the sit-in.

It, however, said that hospital, ambulance, drug store, fire service, utilities and the press would remain out of the

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Police lobbed tear gas shells yesterday to disperse the demonstrators in front of the Jatiya Press Club. — Star photo

Caretaker govt bill may be passed today

By Staff Correspondent

Parliament is likely to pass today the much talked about bill seeking national elections under a non-party caretaker government.

While thanking the Speaker for allowing the members of the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) to discuss the general principles of the proposed legislation, Deputy Leader of the House Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday said, "We want to pass the bill tomorrow (Monday)."

Meanwhile, the bill was sent to an eight-member select committee to extensively scrutinise its contents. The House asked the committee to submit its report to Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali by 11:00 this morning.

The House yesterday witnessed difference of opinion on the composition of the proposed non-party government.

National Democratic

Alliance (NDA) leader Col (Retd) Abdur Rashid Khanidkari said the ruling party should aim at formation of caretaker government which would really be a "strong and effective" one.

Expressing his apprehension that a weak government would fail to ensure an impartial poll, Rashid said the Chief Justice should head the caretaker government and the chiefs of the three services, three judges of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court and the Cabinet Secretary should be included in it.

Treasury Bench member Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed opposed the idea. He said the government should neither involve the armed forces nor the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court in the political process.

The opposing

Inside Jatiya Sangsad

By Nazmul Ashraf

Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali yesterday allowed a few members speak in Urdu on the floor of the House.

"Yes, you tell the Kazi's story in Urdu because I don't hear Urdu since long," Razzak Ali said while allowing Law Minister Jamiruddin Sircar, who took the floor in reference to BNP lawmaker Ebadur Rahman Choudhury's deliberation earlier.

The Law Minister described in Urdu the popular story, "When Kazi's bull hit yours, it's not an offence. But when yours hits Kazi's, it's an offence," he read out from notepad saying Urdu is not my mother tongue.

A smiling Speaker then told the minister, "You've just admitted that you don't know Urdu. Then why do you tell me the story?"

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Govt officials join rally

A section of government officials at a meeting yesterday expressed solidarity with the Opposition demand for cancellation of February 15 polls and a fresh election under a non-party caretaker government, reports UNB.

The officials under the banner "Officials' Coordination Council of the Republic" came in a procession led by Science and Technology Secretary Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir and joined the citizens' rally organised by Dhaka City mayor Mohammad Hanif in front of the press club this evening.

Earlier, cadre officials at a meeting held at the Institute of Engineers adopted a resolution.

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Members of the security forces stand on guard around the Secretariat in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Sectt incident Employees may go for greater movement

By Staff Correspondent

Leaders of six secretariat employees' associations at a rally inside the secretariat yesterday said that a greater movement programme would be launched today to press for removal of State Minister for Education Amanullah Aman and an end to the political crisis.

"A greater programme would be announced if the demands are not met by Monday," said Syed Mohiuddin Ahmed, President of the Sangjukt Sarkari Karmachari Sangram Parishad.

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Bomb blasts, violence kill 5 in Chittagong

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Mar 24: At least five persons were killed and 10 injured in incidents of violence here today, witnesses and hospital sources said.

Three persons were killed and seven injured when bombs exploded inside a room at the government City College at about 2:30 pm, according to witnesses.

Police and hospital sources said one Imran (30) who received bomb injuries at the college died after he was taken to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

Police said two other bodies were removed from the spot by 'follow activists' and they were now trying to recover the bodies.

The explosions took place when 'some activists' were making bombs, police said, adding they later recovered bomb-making materials from the spot.

Pro-Awami League BCL

blamed activists of the BNP-backed JCD for the explosions that 'injured some of its activists'.

JCD denied the charge. BCL did not make it clear whether anyone was killed.

In another incident, a labourer, Fazlur Rahman, was killed when pickets hurled a bomb on a truck at Sabujbagh of Rampura under Double-mooring thana at about 11:30 am. Double-mooring police recovered the body.

An unidentified man succumbed to bomb injuries this morning at the CMCH, hospital sources said.

At least three persons were bullet hit in a gunfight between supporters of JCD and BCL at Bakalia this morning, witnesses and hospital sources said.

They were identified as activists of BCL.

Pickets travelling by autorickshaws exploded bombs at New Market crossing, Agrabad, Andorkilla, Askardighirpar, Lalkhan Bazar and Chawkbazar in the evening, witnesses said.

Tension rose high in the port city on the 16th day today of the Opposition's non-cooperation programme.

Though rickshaws, autorickshaws and tempos plied in the city and a small number of shops and markets reopened on the day, bomb explosions created panic.

Army personnel were on duty at different spots in the city.

Liaison body renews appeal to President

Liaison Committee of the Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday renewed its appeal to the President to make a reference to the Supreme Court on the formation of non-party caretaker government, reports UNB.

Briefing the newsmen after a meeting of the liaison committee, Awami League leader Mohammad Nasim said the only way to overcome the current crisis is the resignation of Begum Zia's government, cancellation of last month's fraudulent polls and a fresh election by May under a neutral non-partisan caretaker government.

The meeting held in the evening at the residence of Awami League leader Abdus Samad Azad extended its support to the dawn-to-dusk hartal called by Mayor Mohammad Hanif to protest security forces' action on sit-in demonstrators.

It also extended its full support to the present movement of the Secretariat employees and urged them to intensify the anti-government movement.

The meeting congratulated the courageous people of Dhaka resisting the attack of the security men and continuation of the non-violent sit-in demonstration.

It strongly criticised the security forces' attack on Mayor Hanif's citizens' rally and other opposition meetings.

About the non-party caretaker government Bill, the meeting said people have already rejected the "evil" initiative.

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No production at most pharmaceutical units

Star Report

Production at the country's most pharmaceutical industries has come to a complete halt since the opposition called non-cooperation programme began 16 days ago, putting the units grossly off their annual targets.

Meanwhile, prices of locally manufactured essential drugs registered slight increase at the wholesale and retail levels. Imported life-saving drugs have become more costly due to the deadlock at the Chittagong port, vendors said.

According to a druggist at Shahabagh, drugs for diseases like cancer have become scarce and costly.

Wholesalers at Mitford area, the hub of the country's drug trade, said they have

'comfortable' stock position mainly because buyers from outside Dhaka City are not coming.

The supply of raw material for the pharmaceutical companies have been severely disrupted, but the low supply and low demand situation has checked major increase in prices, wholesalers said.

But they pointed out that even if the transport services resume, their current stock would be inadequate to meet the normal demand.

A number of pharmaceutical companies reported that some wholesalers are trying to 'hoard' some brands fearing a crisis in the near future if the non-cooperation programme continued.

However, the companies which are selling from their existing stocks, are discouraging unlimited purchase of any one product. They are also reaching medicine to retailers through their representatives in a limited scale.

Meanwhile, incomes of most pharmaceutical industries have gone down by about 50 per cent in the last one month, chief executives of at least four pharmaceutical industries, both local and multinational, said.

"We are not operating the factories, but we have to pay our employees," noted the Managing Director (MD) of a multi-national pharmaceutical company. "My boss from the

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Non-cooperation Blasts, clashes in city: 10 hurt

By Staff Correspondent

At least 10 people were injured in bomb blasts and clashes in the city yesterday, the 16th day of the Opposition called indefinite non-cooperation programme, according to witnesses and Dhaka Medical College Hospital sources.

Badal, a Jubo Dal activist, received bullet injuries at Jatrabari during a clash between the opposition and ruling party activists at around noon. He was later admitted to the DMCH.

According to witnesses two passengers were hurt when a bomb was hurled at a double-decker bus at Mirpur Mazar Road at 10:30 am. The injured were identified as Jamal and Md Ali.

Shah Alam, a minibus driver, was wounded when a bomb was hurled at the vehicle near High Court Mazar at around 11:30 am.

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Water crisis in many city areas worsens

Star Report

Water crisis at different parts of the city is aggravating despite Dhaka WASA's claim that the supply of water has increased.

Water shortage was reported at Narinda, Kalyanpur, Rampura, Golapbagh and other parts of the old city over the last few days. Inadequate supply of water was also reported from Mirpur, Moghbazar, Dhanmondi, Sobhanbagh, Green Road, North Guran, Ahmedbagh and other areas.

Yet, WASA's record of supply shows an upward trend. WASA officials disclosed, that in recent days, the supply rose to 78 crore litres per day from 77 crore litres against a demand of nearly 140 crore litres.

WASA officials said that the availability of water in many places decreased because some water pumps are currently undergoing maintenance.

nance. The water pumps in Baladha Garden, Kalyanpur, Mirpur Section 2, Rampura and Golapbagh areas have been put out of operation for maintenance about three days ago.

In addition, huge pilferage of water by unlisted consumers has reduced the supply flow to the listed consumers. WASA officials noted adding that there might be at least 30,000 such illegal connections in the city. WASA provides over 1.44 lakh water connections in the city.

Leakage of water through the age-old pipelines also waste 22 per cent of the total water supply. The pipeline network of WASA was set up in 1963 and now the network spreads over more than 1300 kilometres.

The total system loss of Dhaka WASA stands at around 52 per cent, causing a revenue

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Appeal to President Dr Kamal for SC views on quickest method, avoiding referendum

By Staff Correspondent

Gano Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain has reiterated his appeal to the President to seek the opinion of the Supreme Court, through a reference, on the quickest method to meet the need for formation of a caretaker government without going for the time-consuming referendum.

He said that the present process of making permanent provisions for a caretaker government would require time and it would only worsen the political crisis, causing further loss of life and damage to the national economy.

Addressing a rally in front of the Forum office in the city yesterday, Kamal Hossain said that although all political parties had agreed on the formation of a caretaker government

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