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## JS dissolved: Chief Adviser takes oath

By Staff Correspondent

Former Chief Justice Mohammad Habibur Rahman last night took oath as Chief Adviser to head a caretaker government hours after dissolution of the sixth Parliament.

Earlier in the afternoon, President Abdur Rahman Biswas dissolved parliament on a written request from Prime Minister and BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia and appointed Justice Rahman as the Chief Adviser.

The President administered the oath of office to the Chief Adviser in presence of the outgoing Prime Minister and other political leaders at the Bangabhaban at 9:45 pm.

Former Leader of the Opposition and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina, Jatiya Party acting chairman Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, Jamaat-e-Islami's Matiur Rahman Nizami, chiefs of three services, diplomats and high civil and military officials, among others,

attended the swearing-in ceremony.

The Chief Adviser, who enjoys the status of Prime Minister, will head an 11-member Council of Advisers which will run the administration until a new government takes over following a fresh general election.

The Constitution (13th Amendment) Bill 1996, passed on March 26, provides that the President will constitute an 11-member non-party caretaker government within 15 days of dissolution of Parliament for holding general elections within three months.

The sixth Parliament was elected in the February 15 polls, boycotted by the major opposition parties for not being held under a neutral caretaker government they had long been demanding.

Later, on March 9, the Awami League, Jatiya Party



Justice Mohammad Habibur Rahman after the oath taking at Bangabhaban last night. BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina are seen on his right and left respectively. — Star photo

## Khaleda urges 'nationalists' to forge greater unity

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday called upon the "nationalist political forces" to forge a greater unity to uphold national interests and to guard against "those out to serve the interests of foreign countries."

Begum Zia was addressing a huge public rally from the Ganotantra Mancha (Democracy Podium) in front of the Naya Dahan party office in the city immediately after making a written request to the President to dissolve the sixth Parliament in the afternoon. The mancha was created yesterday.

Claiming the transfer of power to a non-party caretaker government a victory of the people and of her party as well, the former Prime Minister said: "We have been able to pass in Parliament the Constitution amendment bill for elections under non-party caretaker government. Then I

have made arrangements for the President to form the caretaker government."

The former Prime Minister said she relinquished office to uphold rule of law and protect the national economy.

"We came to power in 1991 constitutionally and handed over power to a caretaker government constitutionally. It is victory of the people, victory of democracy and victory of the BNP."

Khaleda Zia demanded general elections by May this year. Amid thunderous cheers she said, "I hope people will once again vote BNP to power."

The former Prime Minister alleged that three political parties had pushed the national economy on the verge of ruination. "Their non-cooperation movement against a legal government led to closure of hundreds of factories and caused immense sufferings to the people."

She alleged that the non-stop non-cooperation programme was planned to destroy the national economy in the interests of a foreign country. "For whose interest the Chittagong port was kept closed and garments industries were forced to close down?" she posed the questions.

The BNP chairperson cautioned the people to remain alert against any attempt to renew the 25-year slavery treaty with India.

Begum Zia also alleged that the 'Janatar Mancha' (people's podium), set up by the Dhaka City Mayor and Awami League leader Mohammad Hanif, was a stage of 'foreign agents'. "There is a link between the Janatar Mancha erected in front of the National Press Club and the one set up at the Shilbarwady Udyan in the third week of March in 1972."

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## Caretaker govt to get all cooperation: Hasina

Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday described the formation of the neutral non-party caretaker government as a long-cherished victory of the people, reports UNB.

In a statement, Hasina, who steered the movement for caretaker government for last two years, said the people are anxiously waiting for a free, fair and impartial election to the Parliament to set up a genuine representative and accountable elected government.

"The BNP led an operation to Justice Habibur Rahman's government in protecting the interest of the people and holding the coming election, she said.

A historic responsibility has been reposed in the head of the caretaker government. Justice Habibur Rahman, and his colleagues, said Hasina, the president of Awami League. "We hope they will be able to discharge this onerous responsibility successfully."

She put forward several

suggestions, including reconstruction of the Election Commission and preparation of a flawless voters' list to ensure fair voting.

"We want an end to rigging, abuse of power and terrorism from our electoral process, political stability—and economic development would be ensured through establishment of genuine democracy."

Hasina said the BNP government has finally bowed down to the united movement of the people and conceded the demand for non-party caretaker government.

"A neutral non-party government took over the responsibility of ruling the country at a critical juncture of the nation."

She said people hope that this government will take correct and effective steps to bring back normalcy in the administration, restore law and order by recovering illegal arms and punishing the identified terrorists.

The Awami League chief said this government should also take urgent necessary steps to revamp the national economy.

She alleged that the country was put on back tracks because of inefficiency, wrong policy, politicisation and corruption of the BNP government for last five years.

Hasina urged the people to unitedly devote themselves in nation-building activities, saying, "The Awami League does not believe in politics of revenge and hatred."

It is the responsibility of all citizens to guard against any political vendetta and aggrandizement of personal interests, she said, adding that all must remain vigilant against any conspiracy.

Hasina also urged the people to cooperate with the law enforcing agencies in maintaining peace and discipline in towns and villages, and protect life and property of the people.

## Advisers to be appointed in 24 hrs: Rahman

Chief Adviser Justice Mohammad Habibur Rahman yesterday said the 10 advisors of the non-party caretaker government will be appointed within the next 24 hours, reports UNB.

He said he had thought of the personalities to be inducted as advisors, but did not disclose their names.

"I have a difficult task ahead. But I have been assured by the political leaders of their cooperation and I think I'll be able to perform my duties with their help and cooperation."

Justice Rahman told reporters after he was sworn in as Chief Adviser.

The chief advisor who will lead an 11-member caretaker government said: "My prime duty is to restore law and order, and to arrange free and fair election combining the President's inspiration and co-operation of the political leaders and the people."

The 66-year-old former Chief Justice was sworn-in by President Abdur Rahman Biswas as the chief advisor of the non-party caretaker government at the Darbar Hall of

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### NEWS BRIEFS

#### Nasaka frees 3 Bangladeshis

BANDARBAN, Mar 30: Myanmar border security force "Nasaka" today handed over three Bangladeshi citizens who were abducted by them on March 22. Nasaka kidnapped three woodcutter from Lemuchhari area in Naikkhong-chhari thana of the district while they were cutting wood in the forest of Bangladesh territory. They were handed over to the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) after a flag meeting with the Myanmar border security force in the morning, reports UNB.

#### BNP rally today

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) will hold a rally at 'democracy mancha' in front of Nayapalton central office today at 3 pm. BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia will address the rally. Members of all professional groups and working people, supporters and workers of the party and its front organisations have been requested to attend the rally, reports BSS.

#### 15 hurt as BNP, AL clash in S'ganj

SIRAJGANJ, Mar 30: Some 15 people were injured, five seriously, in a clash between the supporters of the BNP and Awami League at Tarash thana today. Police and witnesses said, the clash erupted in the morning at Tarash bazar when a procession of the Awami League was confronted by a BNP procession. Some 20 bombs were exploded during the clash which lasted for about half an hour. Police lobbed three rounds of tear gas shells to disperse the feuding groups, reports UNB.

#### JP rally today

The Jatiya Party, Dhaka City unit, will hold a rally today at Baitul Mukarram south gate. Party City Unit President Col. (Rtd) A. Malek and General Secretary Abdus Salam yesterday in a statement urged all party city units and leaders and members of the front organisations to make the rally a success, reports BSS.

#### Housewife beaten to death

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Mar 30: A young housewife was beaten to death allegedly by her husband at Bagha Ansar Mohalla of Golapganj thana last night. Larina, 23, one of the four wives of her husband Haroon, was beaten up in the morning yesterday. She allegedly also took some poison at noon. She died at night.



Police asked people to walk with their hands up at Mission Para in Narayanjanj town after a clash between BNP activists and police force yesterday. — Star photo

## Two killed, 100 hurt in N'ganj clashes

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANJANJ, Mar 30: Two persons, including a boy of 10, were killed and over 100 people injured in three incidents here today.

The two were killed in firing during a clash between two rival groups of the local BNP - Bodu group and Hasan group - in No 2 Baburail area in the morning.

The boy, Faruk, son of one Md Sohrab, died instantly when hit in the stomach by a stray bullet and Rokunuzzaman Raqq, 20, reportedly reportedly a member of the Bodu group, was fatally wounded and died on way to hospital.

At least 60 people were injured in the gunfight. More than 300 shots were exchanged during the fight that started at 3 am involved around 200 people. The wounded were admitted to different local clinics.

The situation was brought under control by police and

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## Non-cooperation programme ends

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday called off their indefinite non-cooperation programme in view of the dissolution of the sixth Jatiya Sangsad and swearing in of the chief advisor of the caretaker government.

The non-cooperation programme had begun on March 9.

Awami League president Sheikh Hasina in a statement announced withdrawal of all programmes of the non-cooperation movement forthwith and called upon all officers and employees of the republic to join their respective duties 'right at this moment'.

The Awami League chief called upon the authorities to start normal function at ports, railway, transport sectors, waterways, shops, educational institutions, industries, banks and insurances, business establishments, courts and all other public and private establishments.

"We are grateful to you all who have suffered in many ways for making the non-cooperation movement a success in the greater national interests," she said.

Jamaat-e-Islami expressed its gratitude to the Almighty for the victory of the movement at the cost of supreme sacrifices of the people.

Announcing withdrawal of the non-cooperation programme Prof Golam Azam, Amir of Jamaat, said this is a victory of 12 crore people of Bangladesh.

Azam demanded immediate release of all political leaders and workers arrested during the opposition movement and asked people to remain vigilant against attempts to create any chaos.

Azam appealed to the people to cooperate with the law enforcing agencies in maintaining peace and discipline in towns and villages, and protect life and property of the people.

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## 21 JKLF men killed in battle with troops outside Hazratbal Mosque

JAMMU, Mar 30: Indian security forces Saturday destroyed the headquarters in Srinagar of the militant group that had seized control of Kashmir's most important shrine earlier this week, reports AP.

Police in Srinagar said 21 militants were killed, but a spokesman for the state government in Jammu put the death toll at 16.

Among the dead was Shabir Siddiqui, leader of a splinter group of the Jammu-Kashmir Liberation Front, the oldest guerrilla group seeking independence for Kashmir.

Two adjacent buildings were set ablaze outside the compound of the Hazratbal Shrine.

A fierce battle erupted shortly after dawn when troops called on the militants to surrender. A K Suni, a senior police officer in Srinagar, told reporters that nine people — three men, three women and

three children — walked out of the building before the others opened fire.

Troops pounded the building with grenades and mortars and raked it with machine guns until the building collapsed.

There were no casualties among the Indian forces.

The incident came four days after the militants peacefully evacuated Hazratbal, an imposing lake-side white marble shrine and mosque, and returned to their headquarters just outside the compound.

The militants had occupied the shrine for three days following a clash with local police in which at least 11 people were killed. Indian security forces surrounded the mosque and the rebels barricaded themselves inside. Kashmir Liberation Front said the Indian authorities went back on their word to give the militants free passage and had kept them

under siege inside their headquarters.

Indian authorities denied they had struck any deal beyond allowing the militants to leave Hazratbal safely.

The JKLF was the first militant group to take up arms against India in the late 1980s last year. Siddiqui led a split in the group, and was supported by the Pakistan-based founder of the JKLF, Amanullah Khan.

In a protest Friday, Siddiqui's JKLF faction refused to allow prayers in Hazratbal, which houses a sacred relic that devout Muslims believe is a hair from the beard of the prophet Mohammed.

Muslim militants have been fighting for six years to separate Kashmir, which has a Muslim majority, from Hindu-dominated India. More than 12,000 people have died in the fighting.

AFP adds from Islamabad: The Jammu and Kashmir

## Janatar Mancha turns 'bijoy mancha'

The crowd around the 'Janatar Mancha' (people's podium) in front of the Jatiya Press Club beamed with joy as the news of the Prime Minister's resignation was announced from the dais Saturday evening, reports UNB.

Cheering opposition activists danced, sang and shouted slogans welcoming the news of the 'fall of the illegal government' at about 6:15 pm.

They renamed the podium as 'Bijoy Mancha' (victory dais) and burnt an effigy of Begum Khaleda Zia.

Thousands of people — men, women and children — thronged in front of the Press Club where opposition activists started a sit-in demonstration on March 23 demanding resignation of the Prime Minister, cancellation of the February 15 election and fresh vote under a non-party caretaker government.

"This is the victory of the people and of democracy," city Mayor Mohammad Hanif told the cheering crowd while announcing that the Prime Minister had resigned.

The formation of a neutral caretaker government was not a demand of any political party, it was the demand of the people, he said.

The city mayor, who is the president of City Awami League, urged the people to maintain peace and order to facilitate holding of a free and fair election under the caretaker government.

Earlier in the afternoon, Awami Sechasebak League held a rally at the 'Mancha' with its acting convener Habibur Rahman Habb in the chair.

Awami League leaders, including General Secretary Zillur Rahman, Mozaffar Hossain Paltu, Obaidul Kader and Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya addressed the rally.

The announcement on the Prime Minister's resignation followed a session of patriotic songs and parody of the BNP government.

The 'victory programme' started with the playing of the

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## Truce in CHT extended till Apr 30

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Mar 30: Shantibahini leaders have agreed to extend the ceasefire in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) till April 30 to maintain peace and tranquility there during the period of political transition in the country, official sources said here today.

The ongoing truce in the CHT is due to expire tomorrow (March 31).

The decision to extend the truce was conveyed to Convener of the Liaison Committee Hangshad Chakma in a letter from the Shantibahini leaders today. Hangshad Chakma in a letter to the Shantibahini leaders on Thursday had requested for extension of the truce.

The ceasefire was unofficially declared by the Shantibahini on August 1, 1995 to pave the way for holding talks with the elected government. The first round of peace-talks was held on November 5, 1992.

Both the sides held seven rounds of talks.

## Raushan, Manju hurt as gunmen attack JP rally

Several central leaders and workers of Jatiya Party were injured as unidentified gunmen attacked a party meeting in old Dhaka yesterday evening, reports UNB.

Party sources said JP president member and the wife of deposed president H M Ershad, Begum Raushan Ershad, secretary general Anwar Hossain Monju, Jafar Imam and Jubo Sanghati president Saifur Rahman were among the injured.

Jafar Imam sustained bullet injury while Monju, Raushan Ershad and Saifur Rahman were injured with bomb splinters, party sources said. They were admitted to different city clinics.

The meeting, organised by Jubo Sanghati at Chawkbazar crossing, came under attack at about 4:45 pm when party president member Sirajul Hossain Khan was speaking on the dais.

The attackers fired dozens of gunshots and exploded

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