

Govt has no plan to postpone SSC exams, says Minister

By Staff Correspondent
The government has no intention of postponing the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations, said Minister for Education A S H Sadek. Talking to The Daily Star over telephone yesterday afternoon, Sadek said that his ministry had also instructed the Deputy Commissioners to ensure strict vigilance during the whole period of examinations. Earlier, the English second paper examination, which was scheduled to be held yesterday was postponed amidst allegations of leakage of question papers. The minister said "what has been found so far is a handwritten version, giving indication of one set of question of English second paper. The photocopy or the ditto copy of the printed form of the question See Page 12 Col 3

SAARC summit in Male from May 12

COLOMBO, Mar 15: The ninth summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) will begin on May 12 in Male, capital of The Maldives, according to Sri Lanka Foreign Ministry sources today, reports Xinhua. The sources said attending the three-day summit will be heads of state of the seven member countries — India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, The Maldives and Sri Lanka. On the summit agenda will be a South Asian free trade area, South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement, the elimination of regional barriers such as drug trafficking, cross-border terrorism, child abuse and smuggling, the sources said.

ALCWC meets Mar 21

By Staff Correspondent
A meeting of the Awami League Central Working Committee (ALCWC) will be held on March 21 in the city. AL President Sheikh Hasina will chair the meeting to be held at 2 pm at Ganobhaban, the official residence of the Prime Minister, said a party press release.

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DSE MARKET

DSE price index	1498.53(-1.64%)
Market capital Tk	11623.90cr
Transactions in volume	242622
Transactions in value Tk	9.06cr

CSE MARKET

CSE price index	674.05(-1.59%)
Market capital Tk	9199.63cr
Transactions in volume	74845
Transactions in value Tk	15986770

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Foreign Secys of 4 countries to meet in Kathmandu Concept of sub-regional grouping likely to be finalised on Apr 2

By M Anwarul Haq
The concept of sub-regional cooperation among four South Asian countries is likely to be finalised through an agreed minutes on April 2 following a 3-day meeting of foreign secretaries of the countries in Kathmandu. Foreign Minister of Nepal Rabin Dranath Sharma would formally inaugurate the sub-regional conference of Foreign Secretaries while Foreign Secretary Kumar Gyanwali would preside over the three-day meeting. Both have been newly appointed by the new Nepalese government of Lokendra Bahadur Chand. Dhaka, Delhi and Kathmandu, in the last three months, held a series of informal consultations at the highest political level on the concept of sub-regional cooperation. The governments of the four countries have now almost finalised the "finer points for setting the objectives of sub-regional cooperation among them," according to sources. The date for the meeting of the foreign secretaries, fixed earlier, became uncertain following the recent change of government in Nepal. However, the new Prime Minister of Nepal acted swiftly by endorsing the idea and decided to go ahead with the meeting on schedule. The Nepalese ambassador in Dhaka talking to The Daily Star yesterday confirmed that his government would host the three-day meet and said a formal letter of invitation has been handed over to Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan from his new Nepalese counterpart Kumar Gyanwali. The "concept paper" being prepared by Dhaka and the "approach paper" to be presented by Kathmandu will spell out the detailed objectives of the sub-regional cooperation, including the likely areas of cooperation among the four geographically contiguous countries of South Asia. The sub-regional moot of Foreign Secretaries will highlight the areas for exploring the possibilities of taking steps under a common platform to address some identical problems confronting these four countries. The sectors that will receive attention are mainly about expanding economic links, increasing trade and sub-regional investment. Other issues to be highlighted include trafficking of See Page 12 col 6

Voter-registration system to be simplified

The Election Commission has taken steps towards simplification of the existing voter-registration system, reports UNB. An EC press release yesterday said new forms, amending the voter list rule 1982, were introduced for enrollment of the voters for the 1996 elections. The voter registration under this arrangement began in 1995. According to certain circles, filling up these forms is a complicated and time-consuming procedure. In view of this situation, the Election Commission is examining matters of simplification of the voter registration. The Election Commission has, meanwhile, invited suggestion from different political parties and observer groups in See Page 12 Col 2

JCD infighting: Procession on DU campus fired upon

By DU Correspondent
At least 18 students of Dhaka University were injured, three with bullet, when some armed youths opened fire on a Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) procession near the Jashimuddin Hall on the campus yesterday afternoon. The bullet-hit students were Khairul Islam Makhon, a final year student of Management, S M Khabir, a second year student of Accounting and A K M Rashedul Islam, a first year student of Mass Communication and Journalism. Khairul Islam Makhon was bullet-hit in the testicles and the two others were hit in the right thigh. They were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). The condition of Makhon was critical, hospital sources said. The 15 others were injured when the processionists ran halter skelter in the melee following the indiscriminate firing from the roof top of the auditorium of the nearby Surya Sen Hall, allegedly by activists of the rival Tito group in the JCD, witnesses said. Ten to fifteen shots were heard, the witnesses said. The shooting was a sequel to a factional feud in the JCD; the student wing of BNP. Some witnesses claimed that none of the bullet-hit students were activists of the JCD. They were forced to join the procession that was brought out by the JCD unit of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Hall, the witnesses said. A JCD leader, Arif Hossain Taj was killed in a shoot out between the two rival groups in See Page 12 Col 8



Two JCD leaders arrested during a raid in a Dhaka University hall yesterday. —Star photo

AL national council March 28 Contest for GS post likely

By Reaz Ahmad
Sheikh Hasina would continue as Awami League chief as there is no possibility of a contest for the post when the ruling party goes into its belated triennial national council in the city on March 28, according to party insiders. Over 3,000 councillors and thousands of grassroots level party leaders and workers are likely to attend the council. On her return home May 1981 after the 1975 killing of her father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Hasina took over stewardship of the AL. Under Hasina's leadership AL made a comeback to state power through June 12 elections last year, after 21 years. Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to inaugurate the two-day national council on March 28 in the afternoon. The inaugural session would be held at the Outer Stadium while a day-long session on March 29 would be held at the auditorium of Dhaka District Sports Association (DSA), adjacent to the Outer Stadium. AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman is expected to present a detailed report, on the second day of the council, covering various political, organisational and socio-economic developments in the country over the past few years, since the last council of the party was held. Zillur Rahman, a three-time general secretary of the 48-year-old party, is unlikely to retain the post and names of few other party stalwarts are being See Page 12 col 7

Mandela, Demirel due Mar 25

Accords on trade, economic cooperation likely

Elaborate preparations are afoot to accord warm reception to three world leaders who will attend celebrations of the Silver Jubilee of Independence on March 26, reports UNB. The country's most illustrious celebration will be featured by the presence of South African President Nelson Mandela, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Turkish President Suleman Demirel. Nelson Mandela, who is due to arrive here March 25 on a three-day state visit, will also hold talks with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on bilateral matters and global situation. There is a great scope for Bangladesh to expand its trade and economic cooperation with the richest country in Africa, with the GDP of 2 trillion US dollar and per capita income of 5,000 dollar, said a senior official yesterday. South Africa now purchases mainly jute and leather products from Bangladesh. During Mandela's visit, the two countries are expected to sign an agreement on expansion of bilateral trade and economic cooperation. The visit is seen as significant since Bangladesh extended positive support in both national and international fora to the half-a-century-old anti-apartheid movement, led by Mandela. The two leaders are expected to discuss world peace and tranquillity against the backdrop of the changed global scenario. They are also expected to exchange views on "National Reconciliation and Truth Commission" set up in South Africa following the end of the minority White rule in the mineral-rich country. Those who have committed violation of human rights and other heinous crimes during the White rule in South Africa are summoned before the commission. See Page 12 Col 3

Shima murder Deposition of witnesses begins

CHITTAGONG, Mar 15: The deposition of the prosecution witnesses in Shima murder case began at anti-child and women repression special court here today, reports BSS. The first prosecution witness was Iqbal Hossain, Sub-Inspector of Rajon police. He made his statement before the Judge Sayed Enayetullah Khan for about three hours. The prosecution witness was cross-examined by defence lawyer advocate Ehsanul Haq Hena. It will continue tomorrow. The four accused sub-inspector Uttom Kumar, constables Sadek Ali, Gour Karmakar and Abul Bashar were produced before the court today. Shima Chowdhury, a garments worker, was allegedly raped by the police in Rajon police station in December last year. She died mysteriously in Chittagong Jail on February 7.

Yasmin murder Hearing concludes in spl court

From Our Correspondent
RANGPUR, Mar 15: The hearing of the Yasmin rape and murder case concluded in the Special Court, here today. The prosecution lawyers, who submitted their arguments in the case on March 13, also made supplementary arguments today. Barrister Amirul Islam and a senior lawyer of Dinapur Azizur Rahman Mostafiz were appointed as special PP by the Law Ministry to help the prosecution conduct the Yasmin rape and murder case. The defence counsels led by senior advocate of Bogra Majibur Rahman, Abdus Sattar and Abdul Huq Pramanik submitted arguments today strongly denying the allegations. See Page 12 Col 4

Import tax, VAT on generator waived for one year

The government has exempted import tax and VAT on electric generating sets for one year with effect from March 10, an official handout said in Dhaka yesterday, reports UNB. It said the government has also decided to provide relief in the collection of advanced income tax on generators in accordance with this exemption. The handout said the government hopes that this arrangement will make generator import easier and contribute to tackling the existing power crisis.



A scene from the play 'Uttara Priyadarshi' staged by Chorus Repertory Theatre of India at the Shilpakala Academy auditorium in the city yesterday. —Star photo



A schoolgirl studying in candlelight as power crisis plagues city life. —Star photo

Loadshedding won't ease before April : Minister

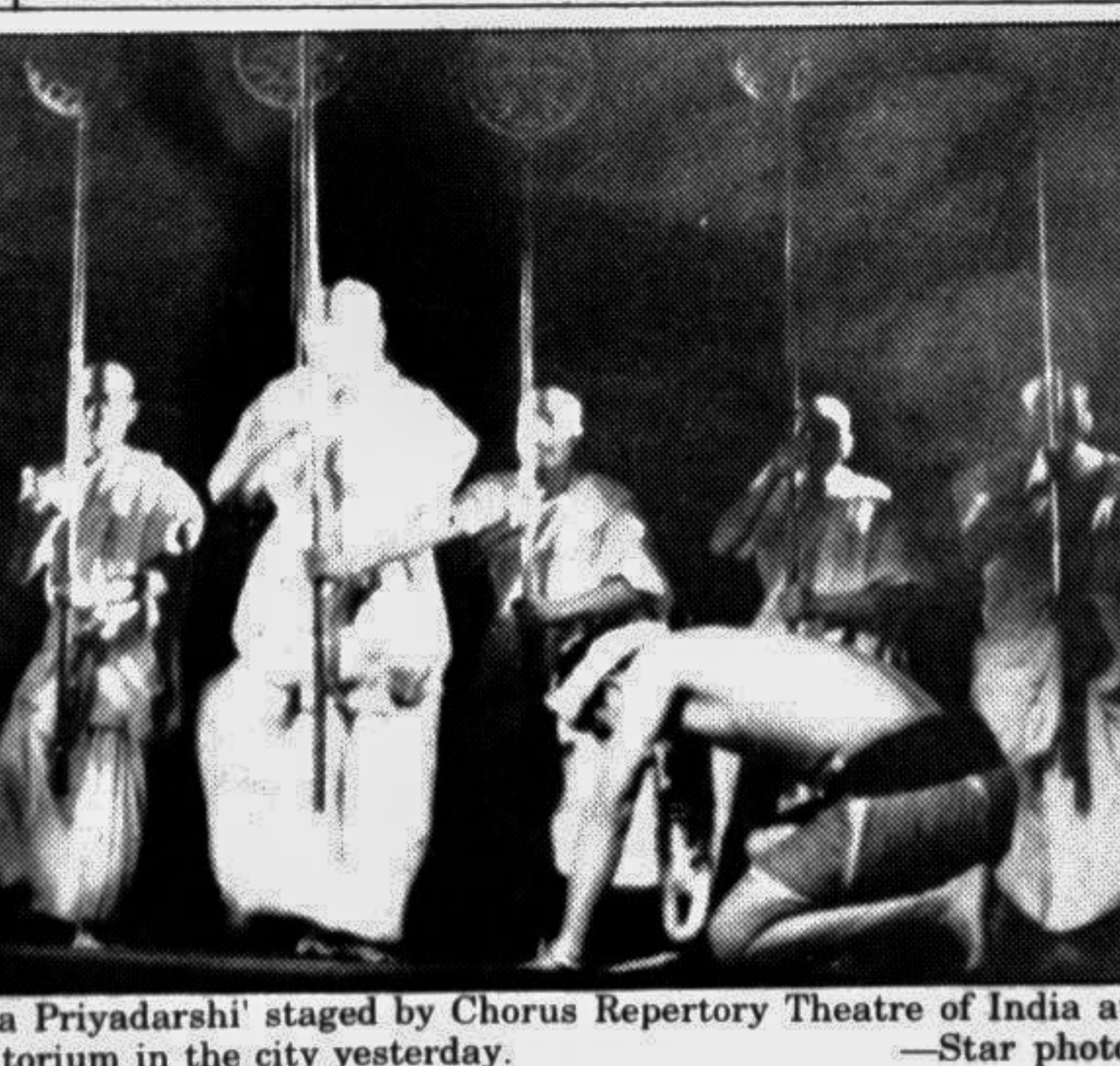
By Staff Correspondent
Energy Minister Noor Uddin Khan yesterday said that the severe power crisis would continue till April 10 when the demand for power would remain very high. Addressing a press conference at the DESA head office the minister said that the present loadshedding would be hopefully drastically cut down by more than 300 MW when the Ashuganj-Bakhrabad (AB) gas pipeline would be completed by April. The demand for power has shot up specially due to irrigation for Irri-boro crops which takes up 250 MW power. This pressure due to irrigation will continue till April 10. To minimise the power crisis, we have decided to allocate a time between 11 pm to 6 am everyday for irrigation, he said. Loadshedding now fluctuates between 300 MW and 400 MW which is about one-fifth of the country's demand for power. The present generation capacity is 2200 MW while available generation is 1650 MW. Short supply of gas has affected power generation in the 210 MW Rajon plant, 100 MW Haripur plant, 55 MW Ghorashal plant and in the Sikabaha plant, he mentioned. The minister explained various problems and prospects of the energy sector in the context of loadshedding at the press conference which lasted for more than two hours. Energy Secretary Taufiq E. Elahi Chowdhury and the chairman of Bangladesh Power Development Corporation Ltd. See Page 12 Col 1

Ctg port workers go on wildcat strike

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, Mar 15: Over 7,000 workers of Chittagong Port began a wildcat strike from 2 pm today to resist a move for using private equipment by a shipping agency, officials said. Consequently, all cargo handling operations suddenly came to a halt at the port from 2 pm today. Chairman of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) Captain Zahiruddin Mahmud, when contacted, said that the workers had started the strike at the sudden call of their Collective Bargaining Agent (CBA) when the Q C Shipping agency took four forklifts inside the port to handle container cargo in its ship. The CPA chairman said the Q C Shipping had taken prior permission to use its private equipment for handling cargo inside the port jetty. He informed that the previous government had decided to allow the use of private equipment inside the port to tackle any equipment shortage at Chittagong port. But in the face of resistance from the CBA of port workers, use of private equipment by any private organisation could not be implemented earlier. Talking to this correspondent, a CBA leader said that the tripartite agreement among the CBA leaders, port authority and the Labour Directorate was reached on August last year not to allow the use of private equipment by any private party, without consulting the CBA. But today the port authority See Page 12 col 7

Khaleda accuses govt of politicising admin

By Staff Correspondent
Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad and BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia has said appointment of "incompetent persons" in different key positions is the prime reason for the present governments 'failure' in running the country. She also accused the government of politicising the administration, especially the police department, resulting in the 'prevailing law and order situation'. Begum Zia was addressing a gathering at her Minto Road official residence on the occasion of joining of BNP by a group of lawyers from Narayanganj yesterday evening. She demanded an impartial investigation to find out how many of her party activists were sent to jails on 'false accusations'. Blaming the Awami League government for 'doing nothing' for the people and everything to please its foreign masters, the opposition leader said, "We have liberated the country not to be integrated with India or governed through dictates from Delhi". See Page 12 Col 1



A scene from the play 'Uttara Priyadarshi' staged by Chorus Repertory Theatre of India at the Shilpakala Academy auditorium in the city yesterday. —Star photo

PM's directive Supply water, power in city on emergency basis

The government has taken up a Tk 700 crore project for maintenance and development of rural roads in 16 northern districts with the funding from the World Bank, report agencies. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was informed this at a briefing held at the Ministry of LGRD and Cooperatives in the city yesterday. The road project is one of the six new projects undertaken by the present government for improvement of various infrastructures and building of new facilities. The meeting was told that a rural infrastructure and development project at a cost of Tk 80 crore had also been taken for See Page 12 Col 4

Loadshedding Farmers ransack TNO office in Rajshahi

From Our Correspondent
RAJSHAHI, Mar 15: Hundreds of angry farmers ransacked the offices of the Barendra Unnayan Kartipakkha and the Thana Nirbahi Officer (TNO) at Tanore today protesting frequent loadshedding. More than two thousand farmers gathered at the thana headquarters and later brought out a procession demanding regular power supply to the paddy fields. They paraded the roads and at one stage attacked the offices of the TNO and the Barendra Multipurpose Development Authority. Police resorted to lathicharge to bring the situation under control.

Jessore PDB office gheraoed

By Staff Correspondent
JESSORE, Mar 15: Hundreds of people gheraoed the office of the Power Development Board here today protesting repeated power failures in Jessore. According to sources, Jessore is now getting only 10 to 15 MW power against the daily requirement of 55 megawatt resulting in huge production loss in mills and factories. Earlier, the Jessore unit of pro-BNP Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) held a rally at the Daratana crossing demanding regular power supply.

Hartal observed in Bandarban

BANDARBAN, Mar 15: A dawn-to-dusk hartal was observed in the district today demanding inclusion of non-tribals in the policy making on Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), reports UNB. The newly formed All-Party Bangalee Gano Parishad had called for the hartal also to protest attack on two Bangalee men last week and demanding constitutional rights and equal privileges for the Bangalee people in the CHT.

Bangabandhu's birthday Diplomats invited to Tungipara function

By Staff Correspondent
Heads of diplomatic missions in Dhaka have been invited by the government to attend the special function at Tungipara on March 17 on the occasion of the 77th anniversary of the birth of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The diplomats will be flown by helicopters from the old Tejgaon Airport at 8 in the morning.