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Tk 245 crore UNDP grant for 8 new projects

Bangladesh will receive US \$245 million dollars, equivalent to Tk 245 crore, as grant aid from UNDP for eight new projects, according to agreements signed in Dhaka yesterday, reports UNB.

The grant aid will be spent for four community empowerment projects (3 rural and 1 urban), three projects for good governance which will strengthen the Election Commission and Parliament, and build capacity for local governance, and one for non-formal employment generation.

This is the first tranche of programmes formulated by the

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Emeka Anyaku arrives today

Commonwealth Secretary General Chief Emeka Anyaku arrives in Dhaka this afternoon on a two-day visit to Bangladesh, reports BSS.

Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan will receive him at the Zia International Airport. During the visit, he will meet the President, the Prime Minister, Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad, the Chief Election Commissioner, and cabinet members.

The Commonwealth Secretary General will also meet Leader of the Opposition.

He will leave Dhaka for Singapore enroute to Australia on Saturday.

Velayati due today

Iranian Foreign Minister Dr Ali Akbar Velayati arrives in Dhaka today on a two-day official visit to Bangladesh, reports BSS.

He will carry an invitation letter for Bangladesh to attend the OIC summit to be held in Iranian capital Tehran in December this year.

The Iranian Foreign Minister will call on President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. He is also expected to have talks with his Bangladesh counterpart Abdus Samad Azad on matters of mutual interest of the two countries.

Power crisis

Shops have to be closed at 7 pm

Shops have to be closed at seven in the evening instead of eight, an official handout said in the city last night, reports BSS.

The order comes into effect immediately and will remain valid for three months.

However, the changed timing of closure of shops will not be effective in case of vegetables, fish, meat and drug stores and also petrol pump, the handout said.

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No more cooperation : Khaleda

BNP calls 8-hour hartal on Mar 23

By Staff Correspondent

Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad and BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia has announced a four-day agitation programme from today ending with an eight-hour hartal across the country on March 23 to 'undo the conspiracy to turn the country into a province of India'.

The planned 6 am to 2 pm hartal is the first such programme against the nine-month-old government of Sheikh Hasina.

The hartal will be preceded by country-wide programmes of meeting cross-section of people today, holding rallies and demonstrations tomorrow and bringing out torch processions the day after, the former

prime minister told a huge public meeting in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the city yesterday afternoon.

City unit of BNP organised the meeting, protesting 'sell-out of the country through a fresh slavery treaty giving transit to India, plan to import power from that country, acute crisis of power, gas and water, deterioration of law and order, price-spiral of essentials and repression on BNP activists'.

'We gave nine months to this government and wanted to give it more time. But by taking this advantage, the government has started conspiring to sell out the country. Therefore, the question of allowing them any more time to execute their evil designs does not arise,' the opposition leader said.

She called upon 'nationalist and patriotic' people to participate in the programmes beginning today if they really loved the country.

'By observing these programmes, we'll let people understand who want to protect

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Khaleda goes to Pabna tomorrow

BNP chairperson and Leader of the Opposition Begum Khaleda Zia will address a public meeting at Pabna Town Hall premises tomorrow, reports UNB.



BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia addressing a rally in front of the National Press Club yesterday. —Star photo

Health officials tell PM

Delay in funding slows project implementation

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government wants to provide health service to all through a coordinated and well-planned policy, reports UNB.

'We have started the struggle for economic emancipation and health is a very important sector in this struggle,' she said during her visit to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in the morning.

Hasina directed the officials to take all steps to bring fundamental changes in the health service and make health service available to all at the earliest.

The Prime Minister laid emphasis on improving child health care system and suggested construction of more child hospitals.

Earlier, officials of the ministry gave a resume of the structure and functions of different organisations under the ministry.

About the on-going projects under the ministry, the officials told the prime minister that weaknesses in management, review and monitoring system, and supervision are slowing down the implementation of project in time.

Till February of the current fiscal year, the progress of different projects was slow.

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AL activists in Sylhet protest formation of ad hoc body

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Mar 19: Some doors and windows of the Circuit House here were damaged by the agitated activists of Awami League and its front organisations this afternoon when election of district AL committee was postponed and an ad hoc committee was announced.

Minister for Industries and Commerce and AL Presidium member Tofael Ahmed who was entrusted with the task of conducting the conferences of four district AL committees of Sylhet division, faced a strong protest when he announced

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Report on autonomy of TV, Betar by June 30

The Commission for Formulating Policy to give autonomy to Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Betar will place its report before the government by June the year, reports UNB.

The commission informed that the report in six chapters will be placed before the government by June 30. Four chapters of the report have already been completed.

The 18-member commission, led by M Asafuddin, called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office yesterday and apprised her of the commission's progress.

During the meeting, 'the Commission discussed different steps already taken by the government and suggested some more measures for giving autonomy to the state-run institutions.'

The statistics of January this year, its previous month and January 1996 showed that only the incidents of murder decreased while various other crimes mainly theft, burglary and kidnapping, increased.

The number of cases increased much in Sutrapur, Mirpur, Uttara, Gulshan, Kotwali, Shabujbagh and Ramna thanas.

A total of 1,432 cases were filed with the 15 thanas in December, 1996, while 831 cases were recorded in the first fortnight of February this year.

'I think that the common allegation against police of not taking case in thanas has changed now a days,' claimed a senior police official. He added that instructions had been

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given to all the thanas to record cases whenever if any person came for that.

He, however, did not rule out the possibility of filing of 'false' cases.

The Officer-in-Charge (OC) of a thana, talking to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity said that the response from affected people has also increased now. He pointed out that there was need for more Sub-Inspector (SI)-level officers who were mainly involved in investigating the cases lodged with thanas.

The OCs and the other thana-level officers, earlier, often refused to record complaints as they reportedly had to face serious problems from the seniors if the number of

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When he fell down, the miscreants pointed a pistol at him. When the Principal's wife came

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BNP's hartal call reflects lack of political acumen, says Zillur

Star Report

Awami League General Secretary Zillur Rahman said yesterday that BNP's call for hartal reflected its lack of political acumen.

Asked about the hartal call the ruling party leader told The Daily Star that people would not support such programme.

BNP yesterday gave the call for an eight-hour countrywide hartal on March 23.

'They (BNP) are trying to fish in troubled water by whipping up public sentiment on some baseless issues,' said Zillur Rahman, who is also the Minister for LG and Cooperatives.

Referring to issues like power shortage and transit to India about which BNP has raised its voice, Zillur said AL inherited the legacy from the previous BNP government.

Mannan Bhuiyan justifies hartal call

By Nazmul Ashraf

What prompted the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) to go for a hartal on March 23 while it had earlier announced that it would declare the next course of action after its ongoing agitations end on March 30?

'It is because of some new developments in the country's political arena ... It's true we promised to announce our next programme on March 30. Also, we vowed to go for revised programmes if the situation deteriorates due to any act of the government,' BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told The Daily Star last night.

Asked what were the new developments, Mannan Bhuiyan replied, 'These are frequent power failures, further crash in the stock market and giving corridor to India.'

Asked how the government has given corridor to India, the BNP secretary general said, 'It's through signing some agreed

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Those killed were mostly police personnel, the news agency said adding, the explosion left more than 150 others wounded.

Earlier, AP from Kabul said an ammunition dump ignited in a huge explosion today, showering undetonated ordnance over a residential area near the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad.

Red Cross and United Nations officials said at least 40 people were killed in the blast.

At least 81 people were

rushed to the Jalalabad hospital. Red Cross official Paladini said, and 110 victims were treated for minor injuries but were not hospitalised.

The ammunition dump was located in the compound of the Jalalabad police headquarters, near a civilian residential section about 10 kilometers west of the city.

Paladini said many homes also had been destroyed. 'We are ready to provide assistance to people affected by the explosion. We are providing tents and blankets,' he said.

There was no official word on whether the explosion was accidental or sabotage, but there have been several previous incidents when depots were carelessly ignited.

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A large quantity of arms and ammunition was found yesterday inside the concrete pipe which was unearthed under an old building at Gulshan in the city Tuesday morning.

A team of experts from Bangladesh Army recovered the arms, bullets and grenades from the 10-feet concrete pipe which was found buried in the ground, police said.

The labourers found the sealed concrete pipe of about 10-inch diameter wrapped in a plastic sheet during demolition work at the old residential buildings site Tuesday.

The army team cordoned off the site at Road No 128 in Gulshan yesterday morning and recovered two sub-machine guns, 20 grenades and around 1,907 round different types of bullets, police added. Later, the army team handed the arms and ammunition over to the Gulshan police.

It could not be known why and when the arms and explosives were kept in the concrete pipe.

Police were planning to send the recovered materials to the concerned testing laboratory.

One Azimuddin Chowdhury reportedly purchased the residential building from a retired Army Colonel back in 1985 and recently engaged labourers to demolish the structure for raising a new building.

Gulshan police could not provide further details.

Edward College Principal assaulted

From Our Correspondent

PABNA, Mar 19: The Principal of the government Edward College, Prof ASM Anisur Rahman, his wife and their 3-year old child were mercilessly beaten in their house allegedly by a group of ten to twelve armed men Tuesday night.

The miscreants who were equipped with deadly weapons forced the night guard to open the gate to the Principal's house on the college campus, entered the house disconnected the telephone lines and asked the Principal to come out.

As soon as the Principal came out, the armed men attacked him.

When he fell down, the miscreants pointed a pistol at him. When the Principal's wife came

See Page 12 Col 2

Former prime minister Kazi Zafar Ahmed, who was expelled from the Jatiya Party Tuesday, will address a press conference at his Banani residence in the city today, said a press release issued by his press secretary yesterday.

He will make a statement on the present situation centring Jatiya Party politics,' the press release sent to The Daily Star office last night said.

Earlier, talking to The Daily Star Kazi Zafar had hinted that he would announce his next course of action, possibly through a press conference today. 'However, it depends on a revision of his expulsion order by the Jatiya Party high command,' he had said.

Talking to this correspon-

Deadlock at Chittagong Port ends

Ctg Customs faces Tk 50cr revenue loss in 5 days

From Nurul Alam

revenue from imported goods of the country is collected from Chittagong port.

He observed that if the stalemate at the port continued further the revenue collection target might not be achieved.

'At that time it will be difficult to fulfil the target set for the Chittagong Customs House for collecting Tk 5660 crore during the current fiscal year.'

CHITTAGONG, Mar 19: The deadlock at Chittagong Port ended with the signing of a three-point agreement tonight, keeping private cargo-handling equipment out of use till April 5. The agreement was signed after ruling party MP

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, assigned to find an end to the deadlock at Chittagong Port, separately met with the parties concerned of the port today, reports UNB.

Port sources said about 1,50,000 metric tons of imported cargo had remained dumped at port sheds due to suspension of delivery.

Vice president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry Kamal Uddin Ahmed said the sufferings of exporters were worse than that of importers due to the stalemate.

Chairman of Chittagong Port Authority Captain Zahuruddin Mahmud said that huge quantities of import and export cargo remain stuck at the port due to the deadlock.

Besides, over 20 vessels remain stranded here due to the stand off which costs 8,000 US dollars per day to every vessel, he said. The importers and exporters will be required to shoulder these financial losses suffered by the vessels, port officials and trade body sources said.

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Explosion kills 50 in Afghan police HQs

ISLAMABAD, Mar 19: