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UMC official kidnapped in Khagrachhari

From Our Correspondent
KHAGRACHHARI, Mar 10: Terrorists kidnapped an official of United Meridian Company (UMC) midnight last night.
Rafiqul Islam, 40, was kidnapped by an unidentified gang of terrorists from a temporary camp of the US oil company which has been a seismic survey for oil and gas exploration from December last. The camp is located in Gashan under Khagrachhari sadar thana.
Police could not trace out the whereabouts of Rafiqul Islam till filing of the report this evening. A case was filed with the Khagrachhari thana in this connection.
UMC had to suspend its activities last week as the company officials were being terrorised by extortionists. High level meetings of the government had resolved that the security measures for foreign companies working in the hill tracts would be strengthened.

20 hurt as police, PCP activists clash at Dighinala

From Our Correspondent
KHAGRACHHARI, Mar 10: At least 20 people were injured in a clash between police and the activists of Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP-Dipty) in Dighinala town today.
Police arrested four activists including Dharma Jyoti Chakma, president of the PCP, Dighinala unit. The injured included several policemen, including Mohammad Shahjahan, OC of Dighinala thana.
Trouble broke out when the PCP faction, opposing the peace accord, staged a march to mark the first anniversary of 'full autonomy day'.
Police said when the

DSE trading suspended on Saturdays

Star Business Report
The Dhaka Stock Exchange Council in a meeting yesterday decided to keep trading suspended on Saturdays with immediate effect.
"It's a government holiday on Saturday and institutional players like ICB, BSRS and BSB remain absent on the day which causes the share prices to go down," said a DSE official.
In a press release yesterday, the DSE said, "due to weekly holiday on Saturday almost all the banks remain closed on that day and institutional members like ICB, BSB, BSRS and Sadharan Bima also remain absent and do not participate in trading on that day. Consequence of that market does not behave properly. So, the council of DSE has decided to close down the Exchange on Saturday with immediate effect."
Meanwhile, the market showed signs of improvement with the price index crawling up by 2.75 points after shedding 41.77 points during the last seven trading days.

Mayor Hanif hospitalised

By Staff Correspondent
Dhaka City Corporation Mayor Mohammad Hanif has been admitted to the National Institute of Cardiovascular Institute with "unstable angina".
The Mayor was admitted to the hospital at around 1 pm Monday. An on-duty doctor last night said that his condition was improving.

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Shaheed Minar incident BNP stages walkout as JS adopts resolution

By Staff Correspondent
The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday adopted a resolution by voice vote condemning the sacrilege of the Shaheed Minar by BNP leaders and activists on February 21 and demanding punishment of those responsible for the incident.
The resolution was passed during a brief walkout by the BNP.
The BNP lawmakers also condemned the incident and demanded a parliamentary probe into the incident and staged a walkout in protest against the part of the Awami League resolution that censured the Opposition for the desecration.
Earlier, some 15 MPs of Awami League, Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Jatiya Party took part in a general discussion on the issue that lasted for two and a half hours.
The resolution, moved by Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim of Awami League said that the leaders and activists of BNP and its front organisations desecrated the Language Movement memorial on February 21. Observing that the attack on the Shaheed Minar amounted to an attack on the national entity.
Selim urged the House to take a resolution condemning the BNP and demanding punishment of those responsible for the incident.
Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the House and BNP leader Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury refused to accept the allegation that BNP activists were involved in the desecration. He suggested that a parliamentary committee comprising MPs from both the Treasury and Opposition benches be constituted to probe the incident and that the names of activists of BNP and its front



Police intercepted a BNP procession at the Roy Saheb Bazar crossing in the city yesterday. The procession was heading towards the DC office to gherao it. — Star photo

Proposed Ganges Barrage project 3-pt Action Plan adopted

By Staff Correspondent
Ahmed, Chairman of Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad.
The Plan of Action suggested immediate dredging of Gorai at its meeting point with the Ganges to augment its (Gorai) flow.
The dredging of Gorai will solve the problem of environmental degradation in the Ganges Dependent Area. A baseline monitoring survey on the effects of additional freshwater flows on saline intrusion should also be taken up along with the dredging it suggested.
It also suggested a detailed study to determine the water-related social and environmental needs of the Ganges Dependent Area (GDA) and assess the technical and economic viability of different options including construction of a barrage across the Ganges and move cooperation among the countries of the region to utilise the opportunities created by the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty.
According to the Plan of Action the Water Resources Planning Organisation (WARPO) will conduct a three-month study starting from March 15 and prepare a detail report before a two-year feasibility study for the Ganges barrage begins.
The National Water Management Plan will, at the same time, identify requirements and take up programmes for the studies which would subsequently be undertaken as a top most priority.
The participants at the seminar felt that many of the serious environmental and so-

Food shortage now 30-40 lakh tons: Khaleda

COMILLA, Mar 10: BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia today said a silent famine is stalking the northern districts due to huge shortfall in foodgrains, reports UNB.
"Awami League means famine," she said reminding the audience of the 1974 famine. "And that's why people are scared of Awami League," she added.
Addressing a public meeting at the Town Hall here this afternoon, the Opposition Leader estimated the food shortage in the country at 30 to 40 lakh metric tons.
Because of acute poverty, she said, "mothers are selling their babies even for a mere Tk 50".
This is a government of breaking promises, she alleged

Rival groups clash during BNP meeting in Khulna

KHULNA, Mar 10: BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told a chaotic meeting of the party workers here today to intensify the movement for dislodging the government, reports UNB.
He expressed his optimism that BNP would sweep in the event of a mid-term election. But he did not demand mid-term polls.
Bhuiyan was annoyed by intra-party feud in his presence. Rival groups of BNP and its front organisations clashed before and after the meeting.
Tension spread around the Swadhinata Udyan, the venue for the meeting, where rival groups chased each other and

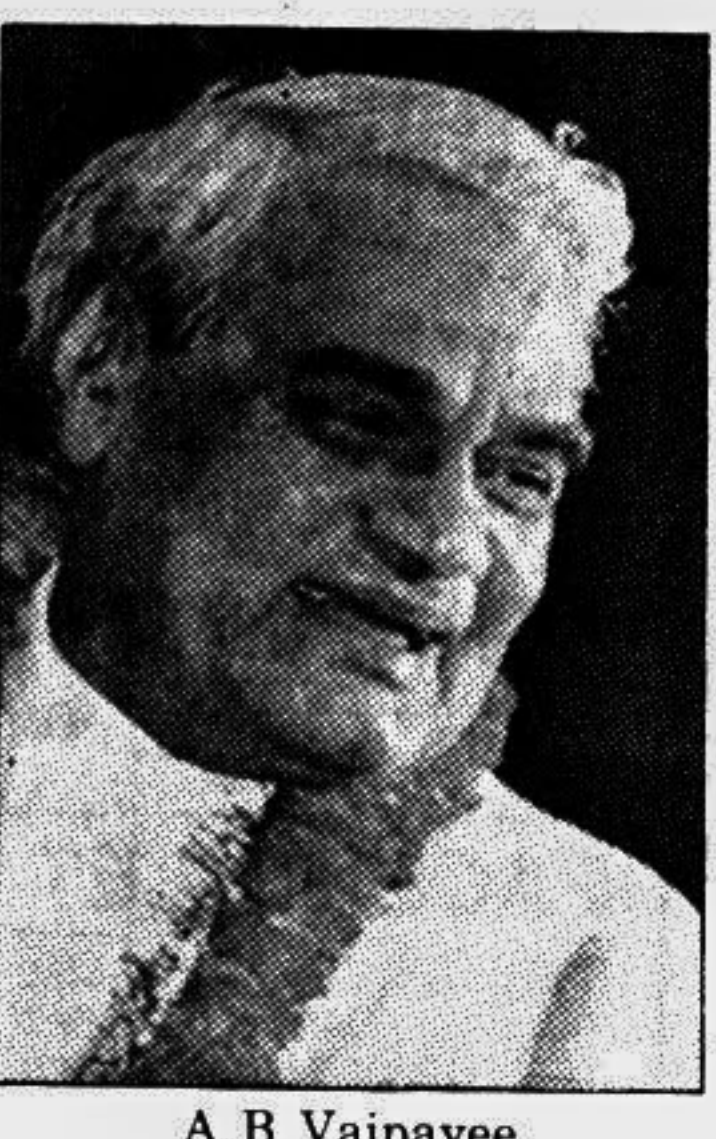
Project for slum dwellers uncertain as govt yet to provide land

By Naimul Haq
He, however, added, "The government assured us of providing land for the purpose on condition that if any government department wishes to use the land within 10 years they may take it back by relocating the settlers. ADB cannot agree to this term as it may cause 'disturbance' to the whole idea of the project."
He further said, "At a meeting with the finance minister during ADB chief's visits to the country last September, the issue of land guarantee was extensively discussed. It was agreed in principle that land assurance (without any condition) would be given shortly."
Asked how long would ADB continue negotiating, Narayan said, "An ADB team is expected this month. If by then, nothing positive appears, ADB will have to decide as to the fate of the project."
Critics argued that there was no reason for delay in giving assurance for land following an important discussion on the project during preparation of the Project Concept Paper (PCP), participated by ministers, high officials from the relevant ministries, donors, experts and the DCC mayor. Besides, there were hundreds of acres of unused land belonging to various government departments that could readily be used for the purpose.
The ADB, after a six-month study by a team of technical assistants, submitted the PCP to the government. It was reviewed by the LGRD & Cooperatives Ministry and the Planning Commission and then it waited for approval by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) in mid-December, 1996. According to the PCP, implementation of the project was supposed to start sometime in January 1997.
UPRP is to be undertaken within the boundary of the DCC, covering about one million people living in 140 squatter settlements on government-owned land. The project will target squatter settlements with over 100 households, where the existing occupants have resided for over eight years.
The project will specially focus on social mobilisation and extensive education programme. LGED will be the executing agency while DCC will be the implementing body for the project.
There are more than 3000 slumps in the city, according to an estimate.

BNP MP alleges Abdul Hye MP assaulted, confined by AL terrorists

BNP lawmaker Shamsul Islam in parliament yesterday alleged that Abdul Hye, an MP from his neighbouring constituency of Munshiganj, was assaulted and kept confined by the ruling party terrorists, reports UNB.
"The life of Abdul Hye is at stake. He was badly assaulted and then kept confined. We do not know his whereabouts," said Shamsul Islam.
He said Abdul Hye came out in the street in Munshiganj to protest the spiralling prices when the terrorists took him away.
Islam urged the Speaker to ascertain security of the member of the House and demanded a statement from the Home Minister about Abdul Hye.
Deputy Leader of the Opposition Dr Badruddoza Chowdhury

Vajpayee invited to form next Indian govt



A B Vajpayee

NEW DELHI, Mar 10: India's president today asked veteran Hindu nationalist Atal Bihari Vajpayee to form India's next government, likely to be an unwieldy minority coalition backed by small, desperate parties, reports AP.
Vajpayee of the Bharatiya Janata Party, was prime minister for 13 days after the 1996 election before his government collapsed when it failed to find allies for a parliamentary majority.
Vajpayee met President K R Narayanan after he received a letter from him asking whether the BJP was ready to form a government.
During the 30-minute meeting, Narayanan asked him to furnish documents to prove his claim of controlling enough seats in Parliament to survive a confidence vote. The documents would be sent tomorrow, Vajpayee said.
The president sent a letter to Vajpayee immediately after the Election Commission presented him a list of newly elected lawmakers.
"I am going to see the president and tell him that the BJP and its allies are in a position to give a stable government," Vajpayee told reporters.
"The task is difficult, but we will succeed," he said before a meeting with President KR Narayanan.
"In so far as yours is a single largest party in the Lok Sabha (parliament) and the largest pre-election alliance, I request you to let me know whether you are able and willing to form a stable government which can

BNP submits memo to DC offices

Workers and leaders of opposition BNP yesterday staged demonstration near DC offices across the country protesting price rise of essentials, reports UNB.
They submitted memoranda to the DC offices demanding that prices of rice, salt, onion and other essentials be brought down and gruel kitchens opened.
The BNP also demanded more development works under programmes like food for work, test relief, gratuitous relief, vulnerable group feeding and food for education for the jobless people.
In Dhaka, leaders of City BNP submitted an 8-point memorandum to the DC office demanding introduction of OMS system up to the union level.
Earlier, a BNP procession, brought out from its city office at Nawab Yusuf Market, was intercepted by police at Roy Shaheb crossing from where some party leaders were al-

Minor girl raped inside CMM's court building

By Staff Correspondent
A girl, aged about six, was raped by an unidentified person inside the police control room on the first floor of the CMM's court building in the old part of the city yesterday afternoon.
The victim, identified as Maria (not real name), daughter of one Fazal Bepary, was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).
Abdullah Mahmud Hasan, General Secretary of Dhaka Anjibi Samity, lodged a case with Kotwali thana in connection with the incident yesterday afternoon but no arrest was made till last night. Kotwali police, however, said that the room, where the incident took place, was used as police control room earlier but now it is abandoned.
Ashraf Ali Mia, a lawyer, attending the victim at DMCH last night, described the incident to The Daily Star quoting the victim.
He said that one man lured Maria with food and took her to the police control room at about 3 pm. Maria complained that she was pressed on her throat and chest with her back pushed to a lavatory wall and later she was taken to a room forcibly. She could not recall what had happened to her in that room.
But, as the girl came out of the room few minutes later, one lawyer noticed that blood was slowly dripping down the girls thigh. Then, the lawyer informed Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) Shahiduddin Ahmed, Ashraf Ali said.
Instantly, the CMM informed the Kotwali police about the incident and rushed the girl to the National Medical College Hospital. Later she was shifted to the DMCH.
Advocate Ashraf Ali, a member of Bangladesh Manabdhikar Bastabayan Sangstha said the girl later told him that the rapist was a dark complexioned man in lungi with short hair.
See Page 12 Col 4

7-party's rally in city now on April 1

By Staff Correspondent
The 7-party alliance led by BNP will hold a public rally in the capital on April 1 and demonstration at the divisional headquarters on March 18.
A joint meeting yesterday, the 7-party alliance took up the programmes in protest against, what they said, a famine-like situation, spiralling prices of the essentials, deteriorating law and order and crisis of power and gas and in demand of cancellation of the CHT peace agreement and withdrawal of cases against the leaders and workers of the alliance.
The alliance had earlier announced holding a grand rally in the city on March 18.
Chaired by BNP standing committee member Abdus Salam Talukdar, the meeting was held at the Minto Road official residence of the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament

JS tidbits

By Nazmul Ashraf
Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury yesterday earned praise from the opposition BNP lawmakers by contradicting Commerce and Industries Minister Tojafel Ahmed on the current prices of onion and salt.
Retorting to the Opposition on charges of spiralling prices of essentials, the commerce minister told the House the price of onion had come down to Tk 20 to Tk 25 per kg and one kg of a salt sold at Tk 10 to Tk 11. In the northern region, he added, onion was being sold at Tk 10 to Tk 12 per kg.
Interrupting the minister, See Page 12 Col 1

2 youths murdered in city : 8 arrested

By Staff Correspondent
Two youngmen were killed while another was critically injured as a gang of assailants attacked them with firearms and sharp weapons in the city's North Jatrabari area under Demra thana Monday night.
Police and hospital sources identified the dead as Tauhid, 24, and Uzzal, 22. Tauhid was shot dead on the spot while Uzzal died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital later in the night.
Ahsanur Al Mamun, 20, son of one Arsaif Ali, who was critically injured in the incident is under treatment at the DMCH with four stab marks in his body.
Police arrested eight persons early yesterday for their alleged involvement in the incident. Police could not confirm the reason behind it.
The incident took place on the Shahid Faruk Road when Ahsanur Al Mamun was returning home at about 9 pm.
A gang of eight persons, reportedly led by Helal, attacked Mamun and stabbed him repeatedly when he reached near his house. As Mamun cried for help, his friends Uzzal and Tauhid, who were then at the house of Mamun's uncle nearby, came out for help.
As they tried to protect Mamun the killers shot Tauhid, a resident of Siddique Bazaar, several times and stabbed Uzzal, a resident of Nabba Shampur, in his abdomen.
As local people rushed to the

Gold, mobile telephone sets seized at ZIA

By Staff Correspondent
Customs authorities at the Zia International Airport recovered gold worth about Tk-10 lakh and mobile telephone sets worth about Tk 4.4 lakh from three passengers of two different flights of Bangladesh Biman Monday night.
Zia sources said out of suspicion customs officials challenged a passenger of a Biman flight from Singapore when he was trying to cross through the 'red channel' at the customs hall at about 9:30 pm.
Officials recovered gold bars weighing about 80 tola and gold ornaments weighing about 652 grams while searching the body of the passenger. The gold was kept inside in some small packets in different parts of his body.
Later, customs officials seized 44 mobile telephone sets from two passengers of another Biman flight from Hong Kong the same night. The mobile telephones recovered were kept inside four video cameras.
None, however, was arrested in connection with the incidents. Three separate cases were lodged with the Customs House.

PM tells Ansar-VDP members Build up resistance against woman, child trafficking

SHAFIPUR (Gazipur), Mar 10: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today called upon the Ansars and VDP members to play a more effective role in building up resistance against woman and child trafficking and women repression, reports UNB.
She said the role of Ansars-VDP is very much effective in raising awareness among the women community. The members of the force is also motivating the rural people, particularly the women, in the self-employment generation works.
The Prime Minister was addressing the National Standard presentation and golden jubilee celebration of Ansars-VDP at the Ansar Academy here this morning.
The Prime Minister lauded the "Village Development Project" of the Ansars-VDP and assured all possible government help in increasing the training facilities and strengthening the programme.
Referring to various problems of the force, Hasina said the government wants to involve the members of the auxiliary force permanently in different development programmes.
She said the government is actively considering the plan to involve the Ansars-VDP members in maintaining law and order under the local government.
See Page 12 Col 1

2 Shibir activists jailed in Rajshahi

From Our Correspondent
RAJSHAH, Mar 10: Additional District and Sessions Judge, Rajshahi, yesterday sentenced two Shibir activists to three years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) for possessing explosives.
The convicted Shibir activists are Rabiul Islam Bhola and Sarwar Hossain Tona.
Court sources said, acting on a tip-off, ASI Shamsul Hoque of Boalia thana on March 27, 1997 recovered three cocktails from the house of Rabiul and Sarwar, two brothers, at village Meerchand-Chalkpara and arrested them.
A case was filed with Boalia thana under Section 3 of Explosive Act.
After examining the relevant documents and cross examination of the witnesses, the Judge Jahurul Hoque sentenced them to jail.

First non-ballotee Hajj flight leaves

TONGI, Mar 10: The first flight of the non-ballotee Hajj pilgrims left here noon with 335 people, reports UNB.
Biman Bangladesh Airlines chartered the Belgian DC-10 aircraft for 11,155 non-ballotee Hajj pilgrims.
Biman officials said the aircraft will fly 33 times after every 21 hours. The second flight will leave Dhaka at 9 am tomorrow.
They said each pilgrim will have to pay Tk 49,995 for travelling with return ticket.