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Only 3 foreign heads of state now to attend D-8 summit

By Staff Correspondent

Only three foreign heads of state or government are now likely to attend the eight-nation D-8 Summit in Dhaka, beginning on March one, diplomatic sources said yesterday.

They are Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, Turkish President Suleyman Demirel and Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, the sources told The Daily Star. All the three leaders had earlier visited Bangladesh.

President of Indonesia B J Habibie has communicated that he would not be in a position to attend the Dhaka Summit. The Indonesian delegation would be led by its Minister for People's Welfare and Poverty Eradication.

Iranian President Khatami has also conveyed his inability to attend. His country's delegation would be headed by First Vice-President Dr. Habibie.

President of Egypt Hosni Mubarak has also conveyed his inability to be in Dhaka for the

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Meeting of D-8 officials begins tomorrow

A high-level meeting chaired by the Prime Minister in the city yesterday discussed preparations and programmes of the D-8 Summit in Dhaka, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will open the two-day summit at Hotel Sheraton on March 1. It will adopt Dhaka Declaration on the concluding day.

The D-8 was floated in Istanbul in 1997 to enhance economic cooperation among eight developing Muslim countries.

Senior officials of the member countries will start arriving in the capital today for a two-day commissioners' (officials) meeting beginning tomorrow (February 25).

It will be followed by the Council of Ministers' (Foreign Ministers) meeting on February 27.

Indonesian President, Malaysian Prime Minister, Turkish President, First Vice-

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Chamber chiefs sweat over renewed strikes

By Staff Correspondent

Business leaders, worried about the country's unstable political environment, have said once again that hartals are highly undesirable for an economy that has already been crippled by a bout of prolonged political unrest.

Speaking to The Daily Star in the wake of the three-day shutdown from yesterday, they warned that their woes would be compounded by the new spate of strikes.

Chamber leaders insisted that nothing rivalled hartals' power in destroying the economy. "It hurts all and benefits no one," said FBBCI president Abdul Awal Mintoo.

They renewed their plea that the politicians try to devise an alternative form of protest.

Meanwhile, chamber leaders will continue their efforts in bringing President Shahabuddin Ahmed into efforts to calm the political nerve. "He has as-

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Announcement

We regret to announce publication of a 12-page issue of The Daily Star instead of usual 16 pages till Thursday due to unavoidable reasons. We shall revert to our usual format from Friday.

—Editor

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Prayer Timings

February 24		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:29	5:34
Zohr	12:15	1:15
Ajr	4:30	4:35
Magrib	6:00	6:03
Esha	7:25	7:30

Source: Islamic Foundation

The Daily Star

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First day of municipal polls

Voting in 18 out of 930 centres postponed

Defying boycott and hartal called by the BNP-led opposition, election in 54 municipalities across the country was held yesterday, the first day of a three-day voting fray, reports UNB.

They are Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, Turkish President Suleyman Demirel and Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, the sources told The Daily Star. All the three leaders had earlier visited Bangladesh.

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UNB district correspondents reported that election were held amidst mirth and enthusiasm, barring a few incidents of violence.

At least 50 people were injured in election related clashes during voting in Sirajganj Pourashava.

Police lobbed tear gas canisters, fired bullets and charged baton to disperse the warring groups who fought a pitched battle exploding bombs. Authorities also suspended voting in one centre.

Of the injured, 26 people were hospitalised while the rest were given first aid.

Police said supporters of two commissioners locked in a clash over casting of fake votes at Ranigram Government Primary School, exploding a series of bombs at about 12 noon. Nine bundles of ballot papers were snatched during the clash that

left 26 people injured.

Police fired five tear gas shells and five rounds of bullet to disperse the rioting groups. Authorities later suspended voting in the centre.

At about 11 am, supporters of the two commissioners landed in a clash, also over casting fake votes at Beparipara Primary School centre. Five houses were ransacked during the clash, leaving 25 people injured.

Police also lobbed tear gas canisters and fired shots to control the situation.

In Sherpur, another 50 people were injured including police and two commissioners candidates, in a massive poll violence.

Authorities had to postpone voting in 12 out of 23 polling centres amid the troubles which police quelled by clubbing and

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Election results

Following are the names of unofficially elected chairmen of different pourasavas, according to the Election Commission Secretariat, reports UNB.

Gouripur (Mymensingh) — M Abdul Ali (3,864 votes); Bajitpur (Kishoreganj) — Mesbahuddin (5,202 votes); Faridpur (Pabna) — Mohammad Abdul Hossain (2,899 votes); Mohanganj (Netrakona) — Latifur Rahman Ratan (4,421 votes); Nilphamari — Dewan Kamal Ahmed (7,178 votes); Gobindaganj (Gaibandha) — M Ataur Rahman Sarkar (3,215 votes); Bogra — M Rezaul Karim Montu (13,006 votes); Pangsha (Rajbari) — Mohammad Wazed Ali (5,529); Moulibazar — Mahmudur Rahman (6,950 votes); Patharghata (Barguna) — Mallik Mohammad Ayub (3,454 votes); Joypurhat (Joypurhat) — K Walur Jaman Alam (8,813 votes); Alamdanga (Chuadanga) — Hasan Kadir Ganu Miah (5,770 votes); Natore (Natore) — Advocate Kamrul Islam (11,911 votes); Kabirhat (Noakhali) — Haji Mohammad Idris Miah (3,021 votes); Barura (Comilla) — Mobarak Hossain Mir (5,016 votes); Jamalpur —

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Polls held by and large peacefully, says CEC

By Staff Correspondent

Chief Election Commissioner Mohammad Abu Hena has said the first day of the three-day municipal election was by and large peaceful.

The field-level reports I have received so far show that the election has been held almost in a peaceful atmosphere," the CEC told newsmen at his office yesterday evening. "Compared to the recent media reports of tension among the people, the elections were by and large peaceful."

Quoting reports of the Election Commission received until 6:00 pm yesterday, the CEC said that voting was postponed at 17 polling centres, out of a total of 930 centres, due to untoward incidents. Abu Hena found the situation rather inspiring.

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Election in 30 municipalities today

By Staff Correspondent

On the second day of the three-day local government polls today, elections are scheduled to be held in 30 municipalities under six administrative divisions of the country.

In Dhaka Division, elections will be held in 11 municipalities. They are Gopalpur, Bhauapur, Muktagacha, Trishal, Bhalukia, Netrokona, Kishoreganj, Rajbari, Shibchar, Damdulla and Bhederganj.

In Rajshahi Division, elections will be held in seven municipalities. They are Birampur, Fulbari, Lalmonirhat, Sherpur, Shajadpur, Chatmohor and Ishwardi.

In Khulna Division, polling will take place in five municipalities: Mirpur, Bharamara, Jhenidhal, Nawapara and Satkhira.

In Barisal Division, elec-

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Army man shot dead in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Feb 23: An army jawan was shot dead by unidentified assailants in the city's Hamgarh area under Panchali thana early this morning, police said.

Naik Badrul Islam, 30, came under attack at 4:30 am while he was returning to Chittagong cantonment from his village home at Trishal in Mymensingh after enjoying a 15-day leave, police said.

Police recovered the body from a bridge at Hamgarh at 7 am.

Police said the killing of army man was not related with hartal though the incident took place an hour before beginning of the 66-hour countrywide hartal.

Police suspected that he might have been killed by alleged muggers.

Police started investigation into the incident, but none was arrested till filing of this report tonight.



A pedestrian, injured in a bomb attack during yesterday's hartal, being taken to hospital.

—Star photo

Sniper attacks mark first day of hartal in city

Cracker blasts kill two, hurt scores

By Staff Correspondent

Bonib attacks by snipers claimed a ruling party activist in the capital and an opposition BNP worker was killed in Barisal in an explosion of crackers he was reportedly making yesterday, the first day of the three-day countrywide hartal.

In some parts of the country, the opposition-called hartal was ignored while it passed off almost peacefully in other regions, barring some stray incidents of clashes, according to our correspondents and news agencies.

Bombs were hurled on processions, streets, buses and other vehicles in the city.

Besides, pro-hartal activists also clashed with police in front of the BNP central office at Naya Paltan and some other places in the city, leaving dozens others hurt.

At least 50 people were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital alone. Most of them had received bomb in-

juries in different parts of the city.

Police detained nearly 200 people in hartal-related incidents in the capital. The arrested include Jagga leader Shaiful Alam Prodhan at Bijoynagar.

The 66-hour shutdown, being enforced by the BNP-led opposition alliance, disrupted normal public life in the city and elsewhere in the country.

The opposition parties are enforcing the hartal to resist the on-going municipal elections accusing Chief Election Commissioner Mohammad Abu Hena of being partisan.

Presence of the pro- and

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Voter turnout below 10pc, claims BNP

By Staff Correspondent

Opposition parties boycotting the municipal elections yesterday claimed that less than 10 per cent of voters turned out at polling centres to cast vote on the first day of the three-day polls.

The first day's polling clearly proved that the municipal polls was farcical and people completely rejected the election," BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said and urged the government to immediately cancel the polls and fulfil the opposition's four-point demand to hold a free and fair election.

There is still time to cancel the farcical polls. If the government fails to fulfil our demands, we will have no other alternative but to launch a one-

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Revised terms for Beximco loans

High Court puts central bank order on hold

By M Shamsur Rahman

The High Court on Monday stayed a central bank order which allowed Beximco Group's *benami* (fictitious) loans from IFIC Bank to be rescheduled in December last year. The court issued a *rule nisi* on Bangladesh Bank to explain why they had given the order.

The court also asked Beximco Investment Company, which defaulted in loan repayments, and IFIC Bank to explain their position.

The rescheduling was allowed in December last year after new central bank governor Dr Farashuddin Ahmed gave a personal hearing to Sohel and Salman Rahman, chairman and vice-chairman of IFIC Bank Ltd. They hold similar positions in Beximco Group.

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