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Half of Ctg city plunges into darkness

From Staff Correspondent CHITTAGONG, Mar 19: About half of the port city and its surrounding areas remained without power since 3-45 pm today as the two units of Raazan power plant remained inoperative following tripping of the national grid, PDB sources said.

Efforts were on to resume power generation in the second unit of the 210 MW plant. It would take at least 72 hours to reactivate the first unit, they said.

Many of the city areas plunged into darkness this evening due to loadshedding that mounted the suffering of the city dwellers, already hit by a hot spell. Power supply to some areas is being maintained from Kaptai project, they said.

Chittagong requires over 300 MW power during peak hours. Chittagong has been witnessing frequent power failure for the past few days due to short supply.

Li Peng due April 12

Chairman of the National People's Congress of China and former Premier Li Peng is due in Dhaka on April 12 on a two-day visit to Bangladesh, reports APB.

The Chinese front-ranking leader, during his stay here, is expected to lay the foundation of the proposed international conference centre in the city.

Bangladesh will receive an interest-free loan of 24 million US dollar from China for the construction of the centre in connection with the hosting of the NAM summit in 2001.

An agreement to this effect was signed between the two countries during the recent visit of Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad to Beijing.

Besides, Li Peng will hold talks with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on bilateral matters as well as regional and international issues of common concern, official sources said yesterday.

The Chinese leader will lead a 120-member delegation during the visit.

2 murdered in city

By Staff Correspondent A young man and a teenaged boy were murdered in the city Thursday night.

They were identified by police as Monir Hossain, 24, a resident of North Shajahanpur and Humayun, 18, of East Govindapur in Demra.

Monir, a phone-fax shop owner, was fatally stabbed in the chest by a gang near his residence when he was returning from his work place at about 11:30 pm. He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared him dead.

Police suspected that Monir, son of Rajab Ali, was murdered as a sequel to family feud. A case was lodged with Motijheel thana yesterday accusing the victim's step mother and step brother but none was arrested till last night.

The body was sent to DMCH morgue for autopsy. In the other incident, some unidentified assailants slaughtered Humayun inside an under construction building at South Matuail under Demra thana.

The killers also cut the tendons of Humayun's left hand and leg. The body was recovered from the ground floor of the building yesterday morning. He was the son of one Abdul Huq Moilla, police said.

The motive behind the murder could not be known. Police arrested two young men - Monir and Anir Hossain - as suspects.

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'Right or Left' vs 'Right and Left'

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Prayer Timings

March 20	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:30	5:35
Zohr	12:45	1:20
Asr	4:30	4:35
Maghrib	6:20	6:23
Esha	7:30	7:35

Source: Islamic Foundation

SAARC parliamentarians say

Peace, cooperation must for people's welfare

Parliament speakers of the South Asian nations met yesterday made an ardent plea for unconditional peace, strong democracy and meaningful cooperation to bring about economic welfare of over one billion people of the region, reports UNB.

The unanimous call came from the opening session of the three-day 3rd conference of the Association of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians at the International Conference Centre in the city.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the meet with an appeal to the parliamentarians of the seven-member SAARC to unite on a minimum point - peace and welfare of the people - against traditional politics that more often than not create roadblocks.

Bangladesh Speaker Hu-

mayun Rasheed Chowdhury presided over the opening session that began at 10.30 am. Lok Sabha Speaker G M C Balayogi of India, Pakistan National Assembly Speaker Illahi Buksh Soomro, Nepalese Speaker Ramchandra Poudel, Deputy Speaker of Sri Lanka Anil Moonesinghe, Bhutanese

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delegation leader Tash Phutsog and Maldives Deputy Education Minister Abdul Hameed Abdul Hakeem read out their statements.

Ministers, MPs, political leaders, diplomats, the city elite and senior officials were present at the inauguration. Lawmakers of main opposition BNP were conspicuous by their absence.

"Peace is the first mandate from the people," said Hasina,

suggesting that despite political and other differences, the parliamentarians should unite on this minimum point to eradicate poverty and illiteracy to make democracy functional.

Indian Speaker G M C Balayogi called for creating a "South Asian consciousness" and gaining economic integration to turn the SAARC region into a power bloc.

Pakistan's assembly Speaker Illahi Buksh Soomro said Pakistan believes in durable peace and stability. He pleaded that peaceful settlement of the Kashmir issue and deterrents to armament could yield a congenial atmosphere for regional cooperation.

Sri Lankan Deputy Speaker Anil Moonesinghe said SAARC brought together all the seven countries in the region that

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Bomb blast kills 60 in Russia

VLADIKAVKAZ (Russia), Mar 19: At least 60 people were killed and more than 100 injured today when a bomb ripped through a busy market in the southern Russian city of Vladikavkaz, a blast immediately blamed on 'terrorists', report agencies.

President Boris Yeltsin sent top security officials to the scene after the bomb exploded amid sacks of potatoes in the center of the market, 50 kilometres from the border with breakaway Chechnya.

The blast was equivalent to some 10 kilograms of TNT, it killed at least 60 people and injured 101 others, local security director Vladimir Bezugov told AFP.

"We are speaking of an unprecedented terrorist act," said Lev Dzugayev, a spokesman for President Boris Yeltsin's regional representative. "There are forces that want to destabilize the situation, who do not accept peace."

The place looks like a meat grinder," said local journalist Olga Vyslova, reached by phone from Moscow, adding that the blast scene was littered with severed heads and limbs.

Local people, many of them crying and shaking with grief, searched through the debris for survivors or helped ferry the injured to the hospital in ambulances and cars. Dozens of police officers and soldiers joined in the search.

Next BNP programme after Eid: Khaleda

BAGERHAT, Mar 19: BNP chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia said here today that the party's next programme would be announced after the holy Eid-ul-Azha, reports UNB.

She was addressing a public meeting at the Khan Jahan Ali college grounds in the afternoon to welcome some new members to BNP, including a leading industrialist.

The chairman of Silver Line Group, M H Selim, two former Upazila chairmen of Kachua and Bagerhat, and a Supreme Court lawyer, with several hundred supporters, joined BNP today expressing their allegiance to Khaleda Zia.

Referring to the Supreme Court verdict on the contempt petition against Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her remarks against the judiciary, the opposition leader said it proved that the Prime Minister had lost her senses.

She said the Prime Minister gives "untrue and meaningless statements both within and outside parliament."

Criticising the ruling party, Khaleda said recent incidents indicate that residences of some MPs had been turned into bomb-making factories.

The government has made the entire country and abode of terrorism, killing and robbery, Khaleda alleged.

The former prime minister said the government has no control over the law and order situation in the southwestern region of the country.

The BNP chairperson will stay overnight at Bagerhat and address a public meeting at Satkhira tomorrow.

BNP to take up issues of public interest

By Nazmul Ashraf and Rezaul Karim

In a major strategy shift, BNP is going to bring to the fore issues of public interest, sidelining the ones that have so far failed to benefit the party in course of its anti-government street agitations, party sources said.

Besides, the main opposition party is also planning to adopt some other strategies to give teeth to the current agitation that had suffered a major debacle during the recent municipal elections.

The party had already put in cold the four-point demand for which the opposition alliance led by it had gone for a series of hartals coinciding with February 23-25 municipal

polls. The alliance continued raising the demands even after the polls and asked the government to scrap the election results.

The four-point demand which BNP and its allies announced simultaneously on January 6 included rescinding of the Election Commission, resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner Mohammed Abu Hena, completion of the voters' identity card project before the municipal polls and bringing an end to 'political repression' on opposition leaders and workers.

"BNP now finds all but the fourth demand redundant in

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Trend of unfair means in SSC exams 'alarming'

By Gobinda Bar

The Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination system should be thoroughly changed to check the 'alarming' rise in unfair means in the examinations.

This was stated by the leaders of teachers associations, Education Secretary, Chairman of Dhaka Board and Director General of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education while talking to The daily Star.

There should be a public examination policy to fight the 'existing ills which have virtually threatened degeneration of the entire education system' they said, emphasizing on creating awareness among teachers and guardians and improving the quality of teaching in schools.

According to newspaper re-

ports, till the seventh day of SSC examinations on March 14 this year, more than 10,000 students were expelled in the country for adopting unfair means and around 150 teachers suspended for helping students in the act.

In Dhaka Board alone, 5,606 students were expelled last year, 3,797 in 1997 and 1,553 in 1996.

A good number of incidents of violence also took place this year in which more than 10 magistrates and several TNOs were injured or assaulted when people who came to supply copies to the examinees attacked examination centres.

Suggesting a complete change in the examination system, Chairman of Bangladesh Shikshak Samity Federation (BSSF) Sheikh Amanullah,

said the type of questions should also be changed so that it can not be predicted.

Demanding adequate security for teachers, Amanullah said teachers often discharge their responsibilities as invigilators in the face of threats from examinees and outsiders. "Teachers engaged in tuition are often bound to supply copies to their students because of their obligation," said the Chairman of BSSF, which includes school and college teachers' associations.

Sometimes teachers of non-government schools also help their students in examination halls because if 50 per cent of the students do not pass in every consecutive three years, the institution's affiliation is cancelled.

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35 massacred in Bihar

NEW DELHI, Mar 19: Communist militiamen dragged sleeping upper caste villagers out of their homes in an eastern Indian village and killed 35 people in a midnight revenge attack, police said today, reports AP.

Armed members of the People's War Group rounded up the residents of the Senari village in Bihar state - considered one of India's poorest and most lawless provinces - and sprayed them with bullets at close range close to midnight Thursday, Press Trust of India quoted po-

lice as saying today. The attack by the PWG, which fights for low caste landless villagers, is believed to be in retaliation against previous killings of 33 people from the lowest caste of Dalits during the last six weeks.

The village is in the Jehanabad district, India's melting pot of caste violence where routine clashes occur between the PWG and the Ramvir Sena, a powerful private army suspected of receiving arms and funding from upper-class landlords.

Design to bomb Sharif's public meet foiled

ISLAMABAD, Mar 19: A plan to bomb a meeting to be addressed by Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has been foiled and three people have been arrested, the labour minister said today, reports Reuters.

"It is because of the prayers of the people that the nefarious design was foiled at the eleventh hour, the official APP news agency quoted Sheikh Rashid Ahmed as saying.

APP said intelligence services learned that 'terrorists' planned to put a bomb at a public meeting Sharif was due to address in the nearby city of Rawalpindi today and to cause "large scale bloodshed."



Man of the Match

Paul Strang of Zimbabwe

Meril international cricket Strang strangles Kenya

By Al-Amin and Syed Ashfaul Haque

Paul Strang caught the Kenyans in a spinning web as favourites Zimbabwe romped to a 133-run win in the inaugural match of the Meril International Tournament at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The leg-spinner returned with 5 for 22, his second five-wicket haul in his 71st one-day appearance, as the Kenyans, chasing a huge 272 in the stipulated 50 overs, were bundled out for 139 with six overs to spare.

Strang, whose best figures is

5 for 21, tormented the spin-literate Kenyans after their openers -- Ravindu Shah and Kennedy Otieno -- gave them a solid start. Negotiating the new-ball attack quite comfortably, the two put on 54 runs in 14.3 overs before Strang struck in his second over.

Strang, who was unfortunate not to have Otieno in his first over, started the rot by getting a menacingly poised Shah brilliantly caught and bowled for 28. The highest run-getter in the

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Joining the 3000 club

Wicketkeeper-batsman Andrew Flower, who became the only Zimbabwean to cross the 3000-run mark during the match against Kenya yesterday, sweeps fine. — Star photo

4 killed in Magura bus plunge

MAGURA, Mar 19: Four people were killed and 25 others injured in a bus accident on Magura-Mohammadpur highway today, reports APB.

Police gave the identity of three of the dead as Nannu, 16, of Binodpur and Fayed, 16, of Arpara in Mohammadpur thana, and the bus helper, Imamu, 25, of Chhotokhali in Shalikha thana.

The identity of the other victim could not be known immediately.

Police and witnesses said the accident took place when the driver of the Magura-bound bus lost control over the vehicle and plunged into a 20-foot roadside ditch at Gnihagram at about 10 am.

The wounded were admitted to Magura Sadar Hospital.

The bodies were sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy. Police seized the bus. The driver of the vehicle fled the scene.

India, Pakistan draw road map for peace

NUWARA ELIYA, Mar 19: Foreign ministers of nuclear rivals India and Pakistan today outlined a plan to bring the two uneasy neighbours closer, reports AP.

They even agreed to cooperate on how to deal with the millennium bug. But on Kashmir, the disputed territory at the heart of their enmity, they agreed only to keep talking.

"We managed to set up a kind of a road map to take the process of dialogue forward," Pakistani Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz told reporters after an hour of talks with his Indian counterpart Jaswant Singh.

"India is committed to ending the legacy of the past and ushering a new era of peace and amity," Singh said at a joint news conference.

They agreed to meet again in September during the UN General Assem-

bly meeting and arrange for lower-ranking officials to meet every six weeks, rotating between the Indian capital of New Delhi and the Pakistani capital of Islamabad beginning in New Delhi in May.

— bring their junior foreign ministers together in April to formalise an agreement on releasing prisoners and address other humanitarian issues.

— form an expert committee to go into all other issues, starting with easing visa restrictions.

— send Indian experts to Pakistan in April to identify areas of cooperation and information technology, including how to deal with the millennium bug expected to make some computer systems around the world inoperable because of their inability to process year dates ending in two zeros.

Bangladesh meet Kenya today

Sports Reporter

Hosts Bangladesh will face Kenya at the Bangabandhu National Stadium this afternoon.

The day-night limited-overs encounter will start at 2 pm BST. Bangladesh Television will telecast the match live while Radio Bangladesh will cover the match ball-by-ball.

Indian umpire VK Ramaswamy and Pakistan umpire Javed Akhter will officiate the match while Peter Manuel will be the third umpire in today's match.

This will be the fifth one-day match between the two ICC associate members since they were awarded with the ODI status two years back. Kenya won three matches while Bangladesh won the other.

Both Bangladesh and Kenya will announce their team today before the match.

Kenya lost their opening match yesterday to tournament favourites Zimbabwe by 133 runs.

Kenya have two players in their squad --- Steve Tikolo and Maurice Odumbe --- with experience of playing at the Bangabandhu. The two Kenyans were in the Mohammedan line-up in the last Premier Division League. Both were more successful with the bat and occasionally with the ball. The Dhaka crowd will closely watch these two to find out if their long exposure to the test of the Bangladesh attack go in favour of the East Africans.

Or, will the Bangladesh bowlers be able to take advantage of their weaknesses.

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Dewanbagh devotees stone Ekota Express: 100 hurt

LALMONIRHAT, Mar 19: A mob attacked railway personnel and damaged railway property in a bid to stop the non-stop Dhaka-bound Ekota Express train at Pirgachha station in Rangpur today, reports UNB.

The station master of Pirgachha and more than 100 passengers of the train were injured in the attack.

Witnesses and railway sources alleged that hundreds of followers of Dewanbagh Darbar Sharif of Dhaka threw stones to stop the Ekota Express as it was crossing Pirgachha station at about 9 pm.

When the train slowed down, the mob beat up its driver and guard. At one stage, the driver managed to speed away with the train.

Further angered by this the devotees attacked the railway station, beat up station master Afazuddin and damaged the signal system. The station master was rushed to hospital in a critical condition.

Police arrested three people from the spot in connection with the incident.

Train movement on the Dhaka-Dinajpur section came to a halt following damage to the signal system.

Alleged mugger beaten to death at Natore

From Our Correspondent NATORE, Mar 19: An alleged mugger was killed and five others were injured in mob beating at Bada Haripur here in the early hours of today.

According to witnesses, the incident took place within 50 yards of Natore Police Line when a group of about eight muggers waylaid two businessmen, who were going to nearby Gokulnagar hat to buy betel leaf and snatched away Tk 13,500 at gunpoint.

Local people, hearing hue and cry of the victims, managed to get hold of six of them and beat them up mercilessly. However, two of the muggers managed to escape.

Police went to the spot and sent the injured muggers to Natore sadar hospital where seriously injured Akka, 30, succumbed to his injuries. The other injured were identified as Shafiqul, Shahid, Swapan, Lokman and Osman.

They were later taken to police custody. Three separate cases were filed in this connection.

Shafique, Saidur new SC Bar Assoc leaders

By SC Correspondent Barrister Shafique Ahmed and Advocate Md Saidur Rahman have been elected president and secretary of Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) respectively for the term 1999-2000.

The annual election of the SCBA was held on March 16 and 18 and the result of the election was declared in the late night of March 18.

Barrister Shafique Ahmed secured 693 votes, while his nearest contestant Md Abdur Rab Chowdhury got 614 votes. Advocate Md Saidur Rahman secured 614 votes.

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Why patients go abroad for treatment? 'Country lacks specialists and improved medical services'

By Staff Correspondent

Speakers at a Roundtable yesterday stressed the need for producing more specialists and improving the quality of medical services to check the increasing number of patients seeking treatment abroad.

Some speakers said the existing referral system should be improved while others said the government should encourage growth of private sector health-care facilities with modern technology so that patients can

get cheaper and better treatment at home.

The discussants said that doctors should give more time for a patient and develop better relations with patients.

The Roundtable on 'Why our patients are going abroad for treatment?' How this trend can be checked? was jointly organised by the Public Health Association of Bangladesh, Forum on Health Care Financing and the daily

Bhorer Kagoj. Md Jahangir moderated the Roundtable, held at the IJO building.

The discussants called for enactment of proper rules to ensure accountability and better management at all levels of healthcare services.

They said there is no proper arrangement now for taking action against doctors for their alleged negligence. Medical insurance and an effective

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