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Dhaka ratifies CTBT

By Staff Correspondent
Bangladesh yesterday ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and joined the global campaign for nuclear disarmament.
The announcement that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina signed an executive order ratifying the treaty was made at a hurriedly called press briefing by Foreign Secretary Shafi Sami yesterday afternoon.
Dhaka's ratification of the CTBT came just 13 days ahead of US President Bill Clinton's visit to Bangladesh. The foreign secretary, however, avoided a question if it was done to satisfy the visiting US President.
The United States failed to ratify the CTBT as the Congress voted it down.
However, President Clinton is personally committed to getting it ratified. Clinton urged South Asian nations recently, including traditional rivals India and Pakistan, to sign the CTBT.

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Clinton's visit US advance team due today

By Diplomatic Correspondent
A 40-member US advance team is due to arrive today to lay the ground work for President Bill Clinton's visit to Bangladesh. The team is also expected to finalise the itinerary for Clinton's visit in a week after consultation with the White House and Bangladesh officials.
The team will set up a "communications and control centre" to ensure Clinton's safety.
This is the third and last advance team to come in connection to the visit.

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Eid-ul-Azha on March 17

The holy Eid-ul-Azha, one of the biggest religious festivals of the Muslims, will be celebrated on March 17, in view of the sighting of the Jilhaj moon yesterday, reports BSS.
Meanwhile, a meeting of the Moon Sighting Committee yesterday evening at the Islamic Foundation decided that the month of Jilhaj will be counted from today and the holy Eid-ul-Azha will be celebrated on March 17.

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Prayer Timings

March 8		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:20	5:50
Zohr	12:45	1:20
Asr	4:45	5:00
Maghrib	6:10	6:15
Esha	7:30	8:00

Source: Islamic Foundation

Increasing participation in parliament 'Political parties main obstacle for women'

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 7: Political parties are the main obstacle to increasing the participation of women in national parliaments from a world average of 13 per cent, the head of the Inter-Parliamentary Union said yesterday, reports AFP.
The real target has to be the political parties," Secretary General Anders Johnsson told a news conference held to launch an IPU study on women politicians.
The study, published before International Women's Day tomorrow, contained what Johnsson called "extraordinarily frank" interviews with 187 women from 65 countries.
Senator Sheila Finestone of Canada described the book as "a wonderful snapshot of politics" and said it brought to light the "tremendous commonality of issues and problems that face women" at all levels of political

life.
The study, "Politics: Women's Insights", showed that the parliaments of only eight countries — the five Nordic states, Germany, The Netherlands and South Africa — had a membership including 30 per cent or more of women.
Despite the relative smallness of their numbers, women had brought about positive changes in political culture, Johnsson said.
"Not the least of their achievements is that there is much less verbal abuse and sexist language than before," he said.
The proportion of women among members on parliament in the Americas averaged 15.3 per cent, for Asia 14.3 per cent, for Europe outside the Nordic countries 13.3 per cent and for Africa 11.1 per cent, the study showed. The average for Arab states was 3.6 per cent.

Among leading European democracies, Italy and France were conspicuous, with about 11 per cent of women among their lawmakers, barely half the percentage of North Korea or China.
"The real bottleneck is the political parties," Johnsson said.
"Political parties have to allow women to go up in the structures, get senior positions, be placed on electoral lists in positions where they can be elected and, when it comes to first past-the-post systems, in constituencies where they are electable."
But he acknowledged that the situation was starting to change, notably because so many countries had adopted targets or quotas for women entering the legislature.
The study gave details of arrangements made by parties in

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A torch procession was brought out in the city yesterday on the occasion of the International Women's Day today. — Star photo

Unite to resist conspiracy to grab power: Hasina

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has warned the people against a conspiracy to grab power through killing and coup.
"They are conspiring in the name of movement... You have to be united to resist any plot to deprive you of or play with your franchise," she said while taking a swipe at her political opponents at a huge public in the city yesterday.
"Bishwabehaya (shameless) Ershad (of Jatiya Party), vote thief BNP and rajakar Golam Azam (Jamaat-e-Islami) have joined their hands together today."
"I would like to ask bishwabehaya Ershad what prompted him to appease Khaleda Zia now who once confined him to jail. I would also like to ask Khaleda Zia about the reason for her terms with Ershad whom she once accused of killing her husband."
Hasina termed the unity of four opposition parties — BNP,

Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and IOJ — as a unity of conspirators whom people had rejected at different times for killing democracy, rigging votes and opposing the nation's independence.
The prime minister said the opposition agitation programmes do not have any issue of public interest. "The only issue is to grab power at any cost. People have rejected their movement because they will not get anything from it."
Ruling Awami League organised the meeting at Paltan Maidan in the afternoon as part of its programmes to mark the historic March 7.
During most of her 38-minute speech, Hasina described the national history from 1947, highlighting the events in '52, '58, '62, '66, '69, '70, '71, '75, '90 and '96.
Speaking about her government's performance in the last 44 months, the PM claimed it

had been resolving people's problems one after another. She also reiterated her party's plan to turn Bangladesh into a developed country by 2020.
Other AL leaders who addressed the meeting included: Forest and Environment Minister Sajeda Choudhury, Food Minister Amir Hossain Amu, Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak, Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed, Commerce Minister Abdul Jalil, Home Minister Mohammad Nasim, Agriculture Minister Matia Choudhury, DCC mayor Mohammad Hanif and State Minister for Shipping Mofazzal Hossain Choudhury.
Sajeda said that yesterday's meeting cancelled citizenship of Golam Azam. "From now on wherever Golam Azam goes, he will be asked to return to Pakistan."
Amu called BNP, JP and Jamaat as three unholy forces forming a nexus while Razzak

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10 power units shut down

By Staff Correspondent
Ten of the country's 58 power generators broke down yesterday, causing 172 megawatts of load shedding nationwide.
PDB sources attributed the disruptions to "technical reasons." Many of the power units are old and can not operate continuously, they said.
The units that shut down included Ashuganj gas turbine-2, Siddhirganj-4, Sylhet gas, Shahjibazar-3, Syedpur, Fenchuganj, Khulna barge mounted-1, Baghabari gas, Ghorasal 4, and Khulna 110 megawatt.
DESA sources said load shedding in their areas totalled 112 megawatts. The PDB's allocation for DESA was 880 megawatts.
Almost all areas of the city, including Mogbaraz, Dhanmondi, Khilgaon, Muggdopara, Kawranbazar, and Old Dhaka experienced power disruptions.
DESA and PDB sources said load shedding could have been avoided if Ghorasal and Khulna 110 megawatt had remained operational.

Join street agitation, Khaleda asks top alliance leaders

By Staff Correspondent
BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday asked all top ranking leaders of the four-party alliance to actively participate in the street programmes to inspire the activists as well as to intensify the current one-point movement.
"Activists are always ready to sacrifice their lives if the senior leaders actively participate in all street programmes," she said and instructed to form All-Party Action Council (APAC) at all levels across the country.
Addressing a joint representatives' meeting of the BNP-led opposition alliance at 29 Minto Road, she also advised the leaders and activists to observe the programmes in future jointly.
"We have formed APAC and held some programmes in the past jointly. We do not want to organise programmes in future separately because our aims and objectives are the same. From now on we will hold all

programmes unitedly," she said.
Representatives of BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami, Islamic Oikya Jote and some other smaller parties of Dhaka city unit attended the meeting.
Referring to future course of action, the BNP Chairperson said the one-point movement will continue until the fall of the Awami League government and said that the opposition would announce programmes even during the rainy season.
She said the government is conspiring to split the opposition alliance by filing false cases and harassing the activists. No conspiracy would be able to split the unity of the opposition, she added.
She said the fall of the 'servile and anti-people' government is imminent and it must have to quit from power very soon.
The BNP Chairperson said the nation has united in sup-

port of the opposition's causes and is awaiting eagerly to see the fall of the government. She called upon the leaders and activists of the alliance to join all programmes in organised way.
She asked the leaders and activists of the parties to make March 12 joint public meeting at Paltan Maidan and mass procession a grand success.
Presided over by city BNP President and APAC Dhaka city unit convener Sadek Hossain Khoka MP, it was addressed, among others, by BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, city BNP general secretary Abdus Salam, IOJ leader Maulud Islam, Saifur Rahman and Taibur Rahman, Jamaat leaders Mohammad Kamaruzzaman, ATM Azharul Islam and Jashimuddin Sarker, IOJ leaders Fazul Haq Amiri, Abdur Rab Yusuff and Abul Kashem and Jagpa leader Emadul Haq Bhuiyan.

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200 illegal pillars removed so far



Wooden pillars sunk illegally in the Gulshan Lake by a real estate developer are being removed by Rajuk. This picture was taken yesterday. — Star photo

Gulshan Lake

By Staff Correspondent
Rajuk has removed around 200 wooden pillars illegally sunk in the Gulshan lake by a real estate developer to demarcate what it called its own land.
The remaining 50 pillars will be removed today, Rajuk sources said. The operation to remove the illegal demarcation by the developer — Shinepukur Holdings Ltd — followed a report in The Daily Star on February 2.
After the report, Rajuk also published a Caution Notice in the press mentioning detailed cadastral survey numbers (related to ownership, boundary etc of land) in the Gulshan lake area.
Shinepukur officials claimed that the area they demarcated was their land and that a Rajuk official gave them permission to put up the demarcation pillars.
But top Rajuk officials expressed their surprise and said they knew nothing about the permission. They also said they would demarcate the Gulshan

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Customs strike called off Minister assures probe after mayor is back

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, Mar 7: Customs officials and employees resumed their duties from 12 noon today ending a two and a half days strike that paralysed the port and customs activities here, customs sources said.
The strike was called off following an hour-long discussion with Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mosharraf Hossain at Chittagong customs house at 11 am today.
Labour and Employment Minister M A Mannan was also present at the meeting.
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina assured Mosharraf to hold discussion with the striking customs officials to resolve the crisis, customs sources added.
The ministers during discussion assured the custom officials and employees that they would not be harassed at the time of duties in future.
The ministers expressed their sorrow and concern on behalf of their government over the incident of harassment of a

custom official at Chittagong airport on Friday, custom house sources added.
Besides, steps will be taken to probe the incident after the return of Chittagong city Corporation mayor Mohiuddin Chowdhury from Saudi Arabia, a meeting source said.
Farid Uddin Ahmed, president Chittagong Customs House Appraisers Association, Shaiful Alam, general secretary, S M Jakir Hossain, joint secretary and general secretary of Preventive Service Association of Chittagong custom house addressed the meeting on behalf of the customs officials and employees.
The association leaders later communicated the message of withdrawal of strike to Dhaka customs house and Benapole where the strike began this morning.
Custom house sources said the custom officials and employees started strike from Sunday protesting harassment

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, Mar 7: Elections for the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) have become uncertain due to an ongoing dispute between CCCI president Kamal Uddin Ahmed and its senior vice-president Saifuzzaman Chowdhury Javed, sources said.
Javed, son of AKHtaruzzaman Chowdhury Babu who was expelled from Awami League after the UCBL incident, has the backing of some dissident directors. He recently chaired meetings of board of directors in absence of Kamal.
CCI director Salimullah said now the row is between the board and Kamal who is isolated now.
However, after staying off the office for the last two days, Kamal went to the Chittagong chamber at around noon and was in his chamber for about two hours. Javed was also in his chamber at that time.
Asked about the stalemate, Kamal said "the commerce ministry now will arrange the election as ordered by the court and

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Shad to remain in police custody

By SC Correspondent
The High Court yesterday fixed Wednesday (today) for an order regarding bail or custody of Rahgir Almahe Ershad alias Shad, son of former President H M Ershad.
An HC Division comprising Justice M M Hoque and Justice Md Abdur Rashid also ordered that Shad would remain in police custody till further order.
He was arrested on charge of abducting a school girl on March 3.
Shad was produced before the HC and examined. However it could not be heard what he said before the court.
Yesterday, the government filed an affidavit in opposition to the writ petition while Ershad also filed a supplementary affidavit contending that the girl's father Mainul Islam on Monday submitted an application to the OC of Gulshan thana

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Subscribers suffer due to banks-BTTB tussle

400 lines disconnected despite bill payment
By Mustak Hossain
A tussle between the revenue office of Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) and the banks collecting telephone bills has created enormous sufferings to telephone subscribers in the city.
About 400 telephone connections under the Maghbazar Exchange were snapped in the last three days due to alleged non-payment of bills.
But many of the affected subscribers alleged that their lines were snapped despite payment of bills in time.
"My telephone connection was snapped without prior notice despite payment of the latest bill issued by the BTTB," a subscriber alleged while talking to this correspondent yesterday.
He claimed that he paid the

bill for January and that no bill was issued for February.
The subscribers suffer mostly because statements on payment of bills do not reach the BTTB from banks in time, they alleged. BTTB should collect statements on bills from banks or banks should send those to BTTB in time, they said.
It is not the duty of a subscriber to prove to BTTB revenue office that bill has been paid, he said.
According to rules, BTTB should give a reminder, at least over telephone, to a subscriber before disconnecting a line.
But in most of the cases this was not done, some of the affected subscribers alleged.
Some other subscribers alleged that in most cases they did

not get bills in time. Bills were given even after the last date of payment expired, they alleged.
BTTB revenue officials sometimes misbehave with subscribers when they go to collect bills or inform the officials about payment of bills, it was alleged. Subscribers have to produce photocopies as proof against payment of bills, another subscriber alleged. Revenue officials sometimes demand money for preparing bill and updating personal laser, he alleged.
When contacted a revenue official of BTTB said, "We are under tremendous pressure from the ministry to collect revenue and have been instructed to disconnect lines if bills are not paid within the last date of

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