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## PM in Cairo: D-8 summit opens today

UNB, Cairo

The third D-8 Summit begins in Cairo today with a focus on trade and economic cooperation among the member states.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina arrived in the Egyptian capital yesterday afternoon to join the Summit along with leaders of Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Turkey and host Egypt.

Before leaving Dhaka for Cairo Sheikh Hasina told the private Ekushey TV that she was ready to talk to Pakistan's Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf.

"I have no objection to talks (with Musharraf), why should I have objection," she said.

She, however, said the talks on the sidelines of the summit depend on Musharraf.

Relations between Dhaka and Islamabad were strained after Hasina in a speech last year at the United Nations Security Council proposed that sanctions should be imposed on military regimes which took power from democratically elected governments, according to AFP.

Officials said the D-8 leaders will draw up future plans to improve the socio-economic status of about 800 million people under the umbrella of the Developing Eight launched in

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## Eid-ul-Azha on March 7

BSS, Dhaka

The holy Eid-ul-Azha will be celebrated in the country on March 7.

It was decided at a meeting of the national moon sighting committee at the conference room of the Islamic Foundation in the city last night.

Joint secretary of the Cabinet Division Muhammad Abdus Satter chaired the meeting. Members of the committee and director general of Bangladesh Islamic Foundation Mawlana Abdul Awal attended the meeting.

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The other side of Operation Desert Storm

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BUSINESS 6 & 7

Chittagong traders blast PSI agents for harassing importers

DSE, CSE price quotations

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Feb 26		5.58 pm
Feb 27	6-25 am	

## Prayer Timings

February 25		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fazr	5-30	6-00
Zohr	12-45	1-20
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-05	6-10
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

# Deadline to free hostages

## Authorities send a strongly-worded note to abductors

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The hostage crisis in the forest-clad hills of Kalapahar in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) took a new turn yesterday when the authorities sent a strong note to the kidnappers, asking them to free the three European hostages within the next two days.

The letter also warned that unless the abductors settled for a negotiated end to the crisis, strong actions would be taken against them.

Meanwhile, the brother of Amulyadhan Chakma, suspected leader of the abductors, also sent a letter urging him to free the hostages.

Amulyadhan's brother is among the 30 taken into custody from Guzarpara of Kalapahar range following a crackdown Thursday night. Police rounded up 70 people, including eight relatives of the suspected kidnappers, during the raid and let 40 leave after screening.

Six of the detainees, including Amulyadhan's brother, were put on remand for questioning, highly placed sources said in the capital yesterday. The sources withheld the name of Amulyadhan's brother for security reasons.

"A letter has been dispatched through intermediaries by the brother of Amulyadhan Chakma with a plea for freedom of the hostages," the sources

said.

The two messengers, who had taken the letters to the kidnappers, didn't return till late yesterday afternoon and, as such, the abductors' response could not be known.

Amulyadhan Chakma, a resident of Guzarpara of Naniarchar, is suspected to have masterminded the abduction at gunpoint of Torben Mikkelsen, Nils Hulgard of Denmark and Tim Shelby of Great Britain on February 16 from Betchhari. The three were working on a road construction project.

Since then the abductors have ducked formal talks offered by the authorities, insisting on payment of taka nine crore as ransom and withdrawal of army cordon around the Kalapahar range. The army has sealed all exits and helicopter-borne commandos are on the standby to go into action.

There has been no word from the kidnappers, widely suspected as members of the United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF), a breakaway group of militants from the Jana Sanghati Samity, or the hostages since February 21. Minister for CHT Affairs Kalapranjan Chakma, who is leading the negotiators, visited Betchhari yesterday.

The UPDF meanwhile reacted sharply to the raids in Guzarpara. Prosit

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## Direct contact with abductors by today, hopes Kalparanjan

MORSHED ALI KHAN and ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD, from Rangamati

Authorities yesterday established a new channel of communication with the abductors who are holding three Europeans hostage for the ninth day yesterday in a remote forest hill of Kalapahar in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

The previously used channel of communication was disrupted following raids and arrests of several people in Dozarpura by the army on Friday.

Kalparanjan Chakma, Minister for CHT Affairs told reporters at Betchhari army camp that they were able to set up a new line of communication with the abductors. He said although no communication was made within last two days, he had been informed that the three hostages were in reasonable health.

"We hope to establish a direct contact with the abductors tomorrow (Sunday)," he said.

The minister expressed his surprise as to how the army and the police could have conducted such raids without clearance from the parties involved.

"I am going to ask the police to immediately release the six persons arrested from different areas," said the visibly annoyed minister.

Official sources said that they had no idea who the abductors were and where the hostages have been kept. They said they had heard nothing from the abductors for more than 48 hours.

The latest information contradict claims made by the authorities earlier that the actual area had been tightly cordoned off and the whereabouts of the hostages were roughly known.

A visit to the remote Dozarpura revealed that the village was totally deserted. When some tribal men were sure it was journalists who had come to the village, they came down from the bushes and talked about Friday's army action.

Jhunu Chakma, aged about 24 years, said that he was the person who first made contacts with the abductors further seven kilometers in the mountainous jungle

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## Countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal today, tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led opposition alliance has called for countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal today and tomorrow demanding immediate resignation of the Awami League government.

In support of hartal, the component parties of the alliance BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote yesterday held separate rallies and brought out torch procession in major cities and at district and thana headquarters across the country.

In Dhaka, BNP brought out torch processions from Alam Super Market at Shaympur, Rampura

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## New CJ likely to take oath March 1

STAR REPORT

Senior Justice of the Supreme Court Appellate Division Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury is likely to take oath as chief justice on March 1, following the retirement of current Chief Justice Latifur Rahman next Wednesday.

As per constitution, Justice Latifur Rahman is supposed to become the chief of the next caretaker government after his retirement, which is subject to his consent.

Born on June 18, 1937, Justice Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury joined the judiciary on February 1, 1975 and was appointed a High Court justice in 1987. He is likely to retire on June 18, 2002. Justice Mainur Reza Chowdhury is due to replace him.

In his private life, Justice Chowdhury is known as a follower of the Pir of Charmonai.

The retirement of chief justice would create a vacuum in the judicial positions. Sources said the government would not appoint any High Court justice in the Appellate Division for the time being.

Sources noted that fresh appointments would be delayed, as the crisis over the appointment of two judges in the Appellate Division superseding other senior judges is staggering.

The president alone appoints chief justice under article 48(3) of the constitution.

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A beaming Indian captain Parthiv Patel (left) holds aloft the champion's trophy after beating the hosts in the final of the GrameenPhone Under-17 cricket championship at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. Nafees Iqbal (right) receives the runners-up trophy from BCB president Saber Hossain Chowdhury.

## Bowlers let Bangladesh down

### India lift Under-17 Asia Cup

AL-AMIN

India lifted the GrameenPhone Second Under-17 Asia Cup title defeating hosts Bangladesh by six wickets in the final at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The final showdown between the future stars of the two Test-playing nations petered into an anticlimactic finish when India topped what promised to be a very competitive Bangladesh total of 225 with eleven balls to spare and six wickets in hand.

Bangladesh dream of clinching another trophy at the junior level since Naimur Rahman's team won the Under-21 Asia Cup in Malaysia seven years back, was dashed after a deft display of batting by the more

focused Indians.

The strong 15,000 home supporters felt the total that the local lads put on the board, after opting to bat in the morning, would be sufficient to challenge the Indians. But it

never happened once the opening stand of Sachin Dhoolpure and Parthiv Patel gave the visitors a flying start.

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## Eid, SSC exams may upset Opposition plans

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The upcoming Eid-ul-Azha festival and the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations may prove to be double deterrents, as the four-party opposition alliance plans to intensify its out-the-government movement through "mass upsurge" countrywide.

According to senior leaders, the alliance has plans to announce fresh programmes, including an ultimatum for the government to resign, from its grand rally in the capital on March 26.

The central liaison committee of the opposition alliance met Thursday to have a detailed discussion on its next line of action and, after nearly two and a half hours of deliberations, decided to go for tougher actions during the last four months of the Awami League government.

As per the draft programme schedule, the opposition alliance would hold rallies and demonstrations across the country to drum up support for the planned March 26 grand rally.

The meeting, attended by the secretaries-general of the four parties, also analysed the failures of the opposition parties over last two years of anti-government movement.

The alliance members were divided when the countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartals on February

25 and 26 came up for discussion.

According to meeting sources, the Jatiya Party faction loyal to jailed president HM Ershad and the Jamaat-e-Islami, two major components of the alliance, vehemently opposed a BNP proposal to call off the February 26 hartal.

Just before leaving for Singapore Wednesday night to have treatment for arthritis, Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia advised withdrawal of Monday's hartal to facilitate movement of the pilgrims flying out to Mecca to perform Hajj. The last Hajj flight has been scheduled to take off on February 27.

In opposition to the proposal, Jamaat and JP leaders attending the meeting argued that such a move would have negative impact on the current anti-government programmes.

The alliance leaders, meanwhile, proposed a series of agitation programmes to sustain the momentum of the opposition movement. The programmes would be finalised in the second week of March after the Eid-ul-Azha.

However, the SSC examinations, scheduled to be held throughout the month, could pose a dilemma for the opposition alliance, feel political analysts. The Higher Secondary Certificate examinations may also hamper the opposition programme in April, they say.

Moreover, as the monsoon begins sometime in May, the opposition movement could face more interruptions and could be left with outlining strategy for the general elections scheduled for September, if everything went as usual.

## Seasoned student politicians!

ABUL KALAM AZAD

Most leaders of the leading student organisations in the country have been in student politics for 16-20 years. These 'seasoned' student politicians, most of them married with children, have held on to their positions in the front organisations of mainstream political parties one way or the other.

The reason is twofold -- money and power. They usually get involved in student politics with the hope that someday they will chair influential positions in their respective front organisations. The aspirants are prepared to wait for years, keeping politics above academic and familial considerations.

Student leaders these days use their positions for

material gains. Politics, for them, has become a profitable venture that requires no capital. Nowadays a mid-level student leader is believed to earn a lot more than an established entrepreneur does.

Some leaders have already amassed huge fortune even before completing their studies. Their source of income is multiple criminal activities -- toll collection, extortion, tender manipulation, abduction, etc.

On the other hand, student organisations' apparent reluctance to hold regular councils to democratically elect new leadership suits these 'ageless' leaders fine.

Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu, newly-inducted president of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), is one such 'seasoned' student leader with two decades of experience

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