

## Kofi Annan due Mar 13

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan is due to arrive in Dhaka on March 13 on a three-day visit to Bangladesh, sources said.

The details of Annan's visit are yet to be firm up. However, sources said the UN Secretary General, a national of Ghana, will also be visiting India and Pakistan during his current tour of South Asia.

Bangladesh is one of the major contributors to UN peacekeeping missions besides being a sitting member of the Security Council.

Two former UN Secretaries General earlier visited Bangladesh. They are Kurt Waldheim and Perez de Cuellar.

## 12 opposition leaders sued for 'ransacking' vehicles

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A case was filed with Dhanmondi thana against 12 opposition leaders, including JP presidium members Kazi Feroz Rashid and Shah Mohammad Abu Zafar, under the Public Safety Act (PSA) on charge of ransacking vehicles at Science Laboratory crossing during hartal hours yesterday.

Mohammad Selim, vice president of Inter District Microbus Association, Fulbaria, filed the case, Dhanmondi police said.

The other accused are Sultan Reza, Khaled Morshed Babul, Hasan Habib Badal, Naim Hossain, Baki Billah, Abu Taher Ayub, Harun-or-Rashid, Shahidullah and Nurul Islam Nuru.

## Fire at Korean jacket factory at DEPZ

BSS, Dhaka

The store of a Korean jacket factory at the Dhaka Export Processing Zone (DEPZ) at Savar was gutted in a fire early yesterday.

Savar police said the fire began at 5:30 am at the store of Swan Loan, a factory which used to make rubber pad of jacket, and continued for more than two and a half hours, causing damage to raw materials.

The cause of the fire could not be known, Savar thana OC said.

## Fire at Ctg: 4 children burnt alive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Four children were roasted alive in a fire that broke out on Saturday night at a slum, popularly known as 'Barisal Colony' near Kadamtoli in the city, Fire Brigade sources said.

Police confirmed the death of three children. They were identified as Iqbal Hossain, 5, Sahana, 6, and Sohad, 2.

The fire originated from an earthen oven at a shanty at around 9:00 pm and soon engulfed the entire slum, leaving about 300 shanties gutted, Fire Brigade and police said.

The loss of property in the fire was estimated at about Taka 10 lakh, Fire Brigade said.

The devastating fire rendered over 3,000 slum-dwellers homeless.

Fire fighters fought for three hours and brought the blaze under control at midnight Saturday night.

Police said Barisal Colony was identified as a den of drug and phensedyl dealers.

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**Bombing of Baghdad: Portending period of new anxiety**  
Column: Perspectives  
Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz

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US-China relations: Signs of strains

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Feb 26		6.00 pm
Feb 27	6-23 am	

## Prayer Timings

February 26		
	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

# No direct contact with abductors yet: British experts reach spot

MORSHED ALI KHAN And ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD, Rangamati

Authorities failed to establish a direct link with the abductors till 6:00pm yesterday, as the hostage drama entered its tenth day.

Three British experts in hostage crisis held a three-hour closed-door meeting with top army officers, government officials and public representatives at the Rangamati Circuit House yesterday.

The military attaché of the British High Commission, based in New Delhi, and two others, known to have worked in similar circumstances at different places, joined the meeting to advise on strategies to handle the crisis.

Minister for CHT Affairs Kalparanjan Chakma and Dipankar Talukdar, the local MP, who attended the meeting, refused to talk to the press.

Insiders said the minister was "not happy" with the way the authorities were detaining an unspecified number of people in connection with the abduction. The minister had earlier requested the authorities to release the detainees at Naniarchar thana, some 40 kilometres off Rangamati.

About press reports on an ultimatum by the authorities to the captors of three European hostages, Brig Gen. Golam Rabbani, area commander of Bangladesh Army, said he did not know of any such ultimatum.

Divisional Commissioner Mohidul Islam said that they had discussed strategies in the meeting. Islam expressed his optimism over establishment

of more direct contacts with the abductors soon. He said that authorities were not considering application of force to release the hostages at this stage.

At Dozarpara and Rangamati-Khagrachari intersection some police officials were seen at around 6:40pm. They said that they had sent a source into the deep forest to communicate with the abductors. The source was yet to return with any news till filing of this report at about 8:00pm.

The authorities yesterday seemed to have chosen the original source to reach the abductors. Sources said the person who had gone to establish a link was used at the initial stage and then left out when Archimedes Chakma and the CHT Affairs Minister took over the negotiation process.

Our Special Correspondent in Dhaka, quoting sources, said, Ranajit Chakma, chairman of Naniarchar Union Parishad, and another local government leader Panchanon Chakma went to Kalapahar to meet the kidnappers yesterday. They carried another letter from the authorities yesterday. But details were not available until late last night.

The CHT Affairs Minister chaired a co-ordination meeting in Rangamati yesterday where it was decided that all the agencies involved in the hostage rescue operation would work in co-ordination with the minister providing leadership, the sources said.

The meeting reviewed the situation following abduction of Torben

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## Diplomats against use of force to free hostages

M ANWARUL HAQ

The diplomatic community in Dhaka feels that safety of the three European consultants should be the topmost priority, as the government tries to resolve the hostage crisis in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

The government agencies should apply force as the last resort and only after having "tired out" patience of the abductors, the diplomats feel.

Should the authorities decide to apply force to free the hostages, they must first pinpoint the location where the hostages are kept and determine the position, movement pattern and resistance capacity of the abductors, they said.

While the diplomats were unanimous on negotiated settlement of

the hostage crisis, no one wanted to go on record so far as payment of ransom was concerned.

French Ambassador to Bangladesh Michel Lummaux feels that the most important part is to get the hostages freed in "good condition."

"Negotiations should be the best means to secure release of the hostages," Lummaux said. "It is important never to put them at risk."

"It will be a disaster for the hostages and for the image of Bangladesh, if efforts for their release led to human casualties," said the Frenchman.

Another European ambassador declined to comment on the situation saying, "Since it does not

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# Success of D-8 lies in enhanced trade: PM



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addresses the D-8 Summit in Cairo yesterday.

## Declaration adopted Ensure fair share of globalisation benefits

BSS, Cairo

The D-8 summit ended in Cairo yesterday with a call for collective efforts by the member countries to ensure "a fair share of the benefits of globalisation" among the developed and developing nations.

In the Declaration adopted by the Summit, the D-8 pleaded that the costs of globalisation should be shared in accordance with common and differentiated responsibilities of the state in a global partnership.

The leaders of the group comprising Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan, Turkey and host Egypt, during their two-day

deliberations at the summit, said: "Globalisation is a reality but its benefits are at present unevenly distributed while its costs unevenly shared." They said globalisation should be turned into a positive process having respects to the basic principles of equity and social justice.

The D-8 expressed concern at the negative impact on the slow-down of developing countries in the major economies aggravating the existing imbalances to the detriment of the efforts to overcome the challenges of globalisation. They called upon the developed

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UNB, Cairo

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday sought enhanced trade and commerce under an effective economic cooperation under the D-8 grouping for improving socio-economic status of the member-nations of around 800 million people.

As the leaders of eight of the world's most populous Muslim countries sat in a summit meeting in the Egyptian capital for expanding economic agenda of cooperation, Sheikh Hasina said the member-nations have a rich resource base that should be put to use for shared prosperity.

"Spanning a vast area from Nigeria in the West to Indonesia in the East, our countries have a rich resource base in human and physical terms," she said, adding: "The potential for cooperation is immense."

Hasina, the outgoing chairperson of new economic bloc, said the success of D-8 cooperation would lie in how well the members are able to exploit the commonalities and complementarities in their economies.

She called for wider and deeper private sector collaboration amongst the member-countries for maximising trade and investment flows. "In course of time, our success may be judged by the volume of trade and commerce among ourselves," the Prime Minister told the inaugural session of the third summit of the new economic grouping at the Al-Tahariya Palace.

The trade volume of D-8 countries Bangladesh, Egypt, Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey is six per cent of world trade while intra-forum trade is little over 3.5 per cent, which is,

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# Private operators want own staff & logistics for cargo handling at ZIA

RAFIQ HASAN

Private air-cargo operators are facing serious problems working with the Biman Bangladesh Airlines.

Although Bismillah Airlines and Best Aviation Limited have permission to run cargo flights, they cannot use their own equipment or personnel for cargo handling at the Zia International Airport. By agreement, Biman, the national flag carrier, owns the right.

Moreover, the two complain that Biman assigns its personnel and equipment at will and at higher prices.

Sometimes an operator has to wait 10-12 hours for its turn. Delay in loading and unloading exportables

increases cost of operation, as the private air-cargo services have to pay additional charges for landing and parking facilities, sources say.

In addition to landing and parking charges to the civil aviation authorities, the operators have to pay 5,600 US dollars as handling charge to Biman for every flight of an IL-76 aircraft. The rate is 2,500 US dollars for each flight of an AN-12 plane.

Handling charges for such aircraft vary from 800 to 3,000 US dollars at other international airports, they claim.

"Biman charges us exorbitantly," Wing Commander (ret.) Habibur Rahman, a director of Bismillah Airlines, said. "How can we survive if we have to pay more than Tk 1.50

lakh as handling charges for every flight.

"We are charged even if we don't use Biman's equipment," he added.

The private operators are now seeking permission to use their own logistics and personnel to avoid "exorbitant" ground-handling charges.

Best Aviation wrote a letter to the civil aviation secretary last September, complaining against the excessive charges. It also sought permission to use its own equipment for cargo handling. However, there hasn't been any action in this regard as yet.

Biman officials say that the

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## Basu bids bye to state assembly

SAKYASEN MITTRA, Kolkata

Jyoti Basu retired yesterday, marking the end of an era in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly.

Since 1946, Basu had been a member of the West Bengal Assembly, and represented first the Communist Party of India and then the CPI(M) in long 55 years of his political career. Apart from the period between 1972 to 1977, he was always a member of the assembly.

In the assembly polls of 1972 from the Baranagore constituency in Kolkata, Basu was defeated by his CPI rival. He had boycotted the assembly for five years, the only period that missed Basu's bold oratory. He attended the assembly as chief minister for 23 years.

All the members of the Left Front yesterday were present to show their respects. The Trinamul Congress, the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party members of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly, however, boycotted all the functions conducted yesterday. The legendary figure of West Bengal politics in his last speech in the legislature said, "The standard of the house has gone down drastically in the last couple of decades. The members have forgotten the norms of the assembly. The speaker should always remind them of their duties. When we were in the opposition, we were a constructive

# Today's hartal from 6am to 1pm

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today's countrywide hartal will be observed from 6am to 1pm as the BNP-led opposition alliance has relaxed the hartal by five hours considering the plight of hajj pilgrims, Eid shopping and drawing of salaries and festival bonus by service holders.

BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said the decision was taken at a meeting of the Central Liaison Committee (CLC) at 29 Minto Road yesterday following requests from hajj pilgrims from different parts of the country. The last hajj flights will leave on Tuesday.

Sources said BNP hardliners, a section of JP leaders and the lead-

ers of Jamaat at the CLC meeting strongly opposed the relaxation of the hartal although BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, who is now in Singapore for treatment, gave instructions over telephone yesterday to either withdraw or relax the hartal.

The same group in a Feb 22 meeting had refused to call off today's (Monday's) hartal defying Khaleda's instructions which, sources said, extremely angered the opposition leader.

CLC sources said JP secretary general Nazimur Rahman Manjur was in favour of withdrawing today's hartal, but some of his own party men echoed with the Jamaat and

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# Businessman murder at Uttara Many high-ups, foreigners used to visit the house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Many high-ups and foreigners used to frequent the house in the city's Uttara area, where industrialist Golam Kibria was killed, police said.

Golam Kibria, a businessman and director of the Kollol Textile Mills came out of his DOHS residence Thursday night. Cantonment police recovered the dead body from the rear seat of his car on Road-10, Sector-1 at Uttara Friday afternoon.

Police have so far arrested six persons including five of a family in connection with the killing.

Imran Hossain, his wife Shazmun Nahar Buli, her daughter Punom, son Pulok and son-in-law Nazmul Islam and Shahida Begum Shahin were produced before the CMM's court on Saturday for remand.

The cantonment police are interrogating the arrested on the first day of their two-day remand.

Police, however, could not confirm till yesterday who killed

Kibria. "We are trying hard to trace out the killer," the investigation officer said.

Police said the arrested confirmed that a good number of influential persons and foreigners used to visit the house for entertainment. Several criminals also regularly visited there.

The investigator quoting the arrested persons said they have been residing in the Model City for about five years and shifted to that house one year ago.

Police said there were several enlisted middle-aged housewives who could easily be contacted for the clients, sources said.

Like others, Kibria also used to visit the house and pay its partial rent.

Thursday night Kibria was staying with Buli on the second floor of the house. He reached the building Thursday evening and had had liquor. At one stage, Nazmul beat up Kibria until he lost his consciousness.

# Case against Morshed Khan sent to special tribunal

UNB, Ctg

All documents of the case filed against BNP leader Morshed Khan and five others under the Public Safety Act have been sent to the special tribunal dealing with PSA cases.

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court here yesterday asked for sending the documents to the tribunal.

Officer-in-charge of Khulshi Thana on Feb 14 submitted a chargesheet to the CMM court against Morshed Khan, his son, their driver and three others, accusing them of ransacking a hotel in Nasirabad on December 26 last year.

Morshed Khan and his son were granted ad-interim bail by the High Court.

# Two farmers shot dead by outlawed partymen in Pabna

UNB, Pabna

Members of an outlawed party gunned down two farmers in two remote villages and injured 15 others in Bera upazila yesterday.

Police said 15 outlawed partymen took shelter at the house of one Akkas at Ramnarayanpur village on Saturday night in the guise of government employees.

At about 2:30 am, they attacked the house of Mannan Mondal at the village and gunned him down.

They then stormed into the house of Joyenuddin at the neighbouring Dayalanagar village at about 4 am and shot him dead.

At least 15 people suffered bullet wounds in the attacks.

With the Eid-ul-Azha just round the corner, different types of sacrificial animals have been brought to the city's Gabtali cattle market. Camels are also there, priced at Tk 40 to 50 thousand each.

# Strong tremor rumbles thru' India, Pakistan and Afghanistan

AP, Islamabad

A strong earthquake rumbled through northern Pakistan, India and Afghanistan yesterday, rattling windows and frightening residents in the region.

The tremor, with a preliminary magnitude ranging from 5.8 to 6.5 was centered 700 kilometers north of Islamabad in Faisabad, the capital of neighbor Afghanistan's northeastern Badakhshan province.

It was felt throughout northern Pakistan, northern Indian states of Haryana and Punjab and much of northern Afghanistan. The

quake comes just one month after a powerful quake shattered parts of India's western state of Gujarat.

There were no reports of damage or injuries in the quake that struck at 7:22 local time. Pakistan's Meteorological office in northwestern Peshawar put the preliminary magnitude of the quake at 5.8 while in New Delhi the meteorological office said it was 6.5.

The US Geological Survey National Earthquake Information Center in Golden, Colorado registered a preliminary magnitude of 6.1, but said the earthquake was fairly deep which would mean less damage than if it would have closer to the surface.

In neighbouring Afghanistan tremors were felt throughout much of the northern half of the country. In the Afghan capital of Kabul residents fled their homes. Witnesses said they prayed and shouted God is Great.

The earth also shook in northern Afghanistan's Badakhshan and Takhar provinces, where opposition troops rule.

"Everything was shaking. We felt two shocks. Everyone ran from their homes, but we have not heard of any injuries," said Mohammed Abil, an opposition spokesman contacted in northern Takhar province.

Throughout the day opposition leaders reached their com-

manders in the area of the epicenter and there were no reports of any major damage or injuries.

On May 30, 1998 a powerful earthquake, with a preliminary magnitude of 6.9, killed more than 5,000 people in northern Afghanistan.

A magnitude 7.7 temblor devastated large parts of India's western Gujarat state on Jan. 26 and killed more than 19,000 people. The epicenter of that earthquake was 1,200 kilometers southwest of the Indian capital of New Delhi.

Another report says, aftershocks jolted a string of islands in

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