

## Pro-Ershad JP

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Ershad held a meeting at the residence of Raushan Ershad yesterday afternoon to take stock of the situation. As many as 12 out of the 31 presidium members attended the meeting. Party central committee leaders were also present at the meeting, however.

Many leaders sympathetic towards Manzur, however, skipped the meeting while those who attended the meeting blasted the removal.

Briefing newsmen, Raushan said Manzur was removed from the post of secretary-general as he had made derogatory remarks against the party chairman.

She said Manzur's removal had been contemplated on Friday but the decision was made effective from Saturday. She also said Ershad would soon be released from jail on bail.

She added that the former president was brought to the BSMUJH prison cell under no understanding with the government.

However, JP presidium member Kazi Feroj Rashid disagreed, saying the removal was not in line with the party constitution and therefore, was not appropriate.

But another presidium member Jafar Imam shouted, "Damn your constitution."  
Meanwhile, Manzur told the Daily Star yesterday, "I'll act according to the party constitution. Ershad can't give order from jail. Only seven out of 31 presidium members were present during yesterday's meeting and the decision was not unanimous."

JP presidium members Dr MA

Matin and Khandakar Mahabub Hossain issued a statement yesterday saying that the removal of party secretary-general was in violation of party constitution.

They urged senior JP leaders not to take extra-constitutional decision, and sought Ershad's intervention.

JP joint-secretary-general Moidul Islam in another statement said, "As per the constitution, I'm supposed to be the acting secretary-general." He also condemned the decision to remove Manzur and appoint ABM Shahjahan acting secretary-general.

In another development, Barrister Rafiqul Haq, one of Ershad's counsels, informed the jail authorities that he would no longer appear for his client.

Jatiya Party, Ershad faction, is still trying to convince its allies that its lawmakers would join the upcoming Jatiya Sangsad session only to prove its majority and secure 'plough' as election symbol.

They will meet the Speaker at his office today to seek division vote to justify the faction's move.

But legal experts say that merely proving factional majority in the parliament does not guarantee securing plough as election symbol. Besides, majority could be proved at the Speaker's chamber, it does not require party MPs to join the session.

But, JP presidium member GM Kader told reporters at the press briefing that

"we don't say that by attending the parliament session we'll protect the 'plough', but there is no doubt that if we don't we are going to lose it."

## Storm lashes Shahjadpur: 5000 houses damaged

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj**

About 5000 kutcha houses were damaged and at least 15 people were injured when norwester hit Shahjadpur Upazila last night and on Thursday evening.

TNO office sources and witnesses said crops on about 10 thousand acres of land were damaged and many trees and electric poles were uprooted in the storm.

The injured were treated at Shahjadpur Upazila health center.

## Betar Kendra

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steps for the development of television and setting up new relay stations for the convenience of upcountry people.

The prime minister said the government is taking necessary steps to develop Cox's Bazar as a real tourist city.

She said the government allocated money for the feasibility study to set up railway from Chittagong to Cox's Bazar and other steps for the development of tourist resort.

"We will develop different sources of entertainment in the tourist spot to attract local and foreign tourists," she said, adding that the local airport will also be developed.

## Mosquito menace

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Met office sources pointed out that the drizzle in the city on March 5 was so insignificant that they could not even measure it. However, the city experienced seven mm of rain on March 1.

"Every day our technical reports indicate symptoms of thunderstorms but currently we are experiencing lack of southerly feeding, which means that moisture is not being carried from the Bay of Bengal to cause a shower," said one official. He however added that the usual thunderstorm for the current month might come any time.

## Arsenic

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mission of the WB from Washington arrived here on March 15.

The mission wanted to meet the taskforce informally first, and then formally again, but some members of the taskforce opposed the idea of informal meeting.

The LGD secretary declined the appointment the mission sought, saying that the team should not meet officials individually.

The latest blow to BAMWSP came at a time when arsenic mitigation activities have been criticised by the experts both home and abroad.

The primary task of BAMWSP procuring field test kits to know which tubewells are contaminated has not started yet.

Its second most important task is to find the 'menu of options' for alternative source of safe drinking water for those having no access to safe water.



## Appeal for help

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The founder of Ayomoy Sangskritik Sangshad and actor Mosharrif Hossain has been suffering from cancer for long. Doctors suggested him to go abroad for better treatment, said a press release by the Sangshad.

But his family can not afford to send him abroad for treatment. He needs support from the wealthy people and well-wishers. The people who want to help him have been requested to send money to his bank account.

His account number is savings account, 4248/30 at Sonali Bank Bananibazar Branch, the press release added.

## Makhdoom recalls memories of '71

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Zahid Makhdoom, a student leader during the year 1971, was arrested on March 26 in the province of Sindh because he had distributed some leaflets two days back condemning the forthcoming attack by the Pakistan military on freedom-loving people of the then East Pakistan.

He was arrested from Larkana and remained in jail during the entire period of Liberation War in Bangladesh. He was kept in a small condemn cell and knew nothing what was happening in Pakistan.

Zahid was released on December 17, and only then learnt that the people of Bangladesh won the Liberation War.

He was recalling his memory while talking to newsmen at a press conference yesterday.

Zahid, now a prominent human rights activist in Canada came to Dhaka on Friday along with Dr. Aadarsh Sindh, another US-based Sindh human rights activist to seek moral support for the struggle of their fellow people for self-determination.

They expressed solidarity with the movement in Bangladesh for bringing war criminals into trial. The criminals must be brought before the court for their atrocities during the Liberation War in Bangladesh, they said.

"We are now condemning the atrocities perpetrated by Pakistan military rulers during the year 1971 in Bangladesh as we did 30 years back," Zahid said expressing sympathy to the victims of the Liberation War in Bangladesh.

"People in Sindh now are facing the same situation what Bangladesh faced before independence," he said seeking moral support to their struggle for self-determination.



Justice Zahid Makhdoom, an advisor of the World Sindhi Institute (WSI), answers questions from journalists at a press conference at the Liberation War Museum in the city yesterday.

They said a famine like situation is now prevailing in the province of Sindh in Pakistan and the people are struggling for freedom and self-determination.

The people would not have any option but to revolt against the military-led administration if urgent measures are not taken for Sindh, an oppressed nation for long, they added.

They also described Pakistan's internal situation as 'chaotic' and observed that it could be survived only if it became a truly democratic, secular, non-militarised and federal state.

They said senseless war-mongering and brutal exploitation and discrimination of all non-Punjabi nationalities have created an explosive internal condition that can destroy Pakistan as we have witnessed in 1971.

Sindh is no longer in a position to tolerate further exploitation of its national resources, destruction of its

cultural identity and humiliating treatment of its people, they added.

Zahid left Pakistan in the year 1978 as the situation was not comfortable for him to stay there because of deteriorating political situation. He obtained political asylum in Canada and has been living there since then.

He only could return to Pakistan in 1989 following the fall of military rule led by president Ziaul Haq.

They visited the Liberation War Museum in Segunbagicha and Bangabandhu Museum in Dhanmondi and became emotional observing the picture of atrocities committed by the Pakistani military in 1971.

Paying utmost respect to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of the Nation of Bangladesh, they also condemned his brutal killing in 1975.

## Trial of war criminals demanded

**BSS, Dhaka**

Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote (BSJ) yesterday staged a rally demanding trial of 1971 war criminals and protesting the opposition's hobnobbing with the anti-liberation elements.

Addressing the rally at Ramna Star gate, the speakers said when the main opposition BNP joins hands with the elements, who called the freedom fighters as "bustards," the party (BNP) in fact humiliates its founder Ziaur Rahman, who was a freedom fighter.

The speakers observed that even Bangladesh Awami League didn't ever project Zia a figure of disrespect to that extent.

They also questioned the role of freedom fighters in BNP who took part in the war saying they would also have to share the blame for friendship with the anti-liberation elements.

President of the organisation Alamgir Kabir, film personalities Faruk, Dilara Yasmin, newscaster Rashida Mohiuddin and other Jote leaders including Arun Sarkar Rana, M A Karim, Joydeb Roy, Mahmud Hassan, Tipu Sultan, Monisa,

Sahadat Hossain Rubel, Mohammad Sayem Hossain, Ashraf Hassan Ashu, Afsar Uddin, Shamsuddin Master, Sadhan Chandra Ghose, and Advocate M A Rahim addressed the rally.

## Civil Defence Week begins today

**UNB, Dhaka**

The Fire Service and Civil Defence Week 2001 begins today across the country where property worth crore of taka are gutted every year in fire incidents.

Some 5,315 fire incidents occurred in the country last year causing damage to property worth over Tk 81.48 crore while the firefighters saved property worth about Tk 228 crore.

According to Fire Brigade sources, electric short circuit caused nearly one third or 1,720 fire incidents while 1,160 originated from oven.

The Fire Brigade has 130 stations with 4,500 firefighters across the country while work on setting up another 162 stations is in progress, the sources added.

## Hasina's candidature

**FROM PAGE 1**

"The news may be intended to belittle the phenomenal success of Sheikh Hasina achieved as the prime minister. This could only happen after she retired from politics."

Press Secretary to the Prime Minister Jawadul Karim said, "The news is totally baseless and beyond comprehension. The position of UN Secretary General is that of a Secretary. She has always served the country and worked for the common people of Bangladesh and intends to continue doing that."

He suggested that it could have been circulated with some malicious motive by vested quarters.

International news agency Associated Press (AP) in an item created from United Nations at New York suggested that Bangladesh Prime Minister Hasina would run for the post of UN Secretary General. It also named Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga, former Thai foreign minister Surin Pitsuwan, Bangladesh's UN Representative Anwarul Karim Chowdhury as likely contenders.

Before the start of Kofi Annan's March 10-17 South Asian tour, The Daily Star reported that one of his major objectives was to ensure Asian support for a second term in office.

Annan, however, dismissed such speculations throughout the trip and also in Dhaka when asked on March 13. Interestingly, a few days later, on March 22, the incumbent UN Secretary General announced in New York that he would seek a second term as the top executive of the 189-member organisation.

A ranking official in Dhaka suggested that it was likely that Bangladesh Permanent

Representative Anwarul Karim Chowdhury had been an aspirant for the position but having not received any endorsement from home had lumped his name together with that of the Bangladesh Prime Minister.

"He (Anwarul Karim) would be happy to get any position so long as he could stay in New York," said another official who informed that the Bangladesh envoy was over-staying in New York for several years at a stretch.

Kofi Annan, who turns 63 next month, is the seventh Secretary General of the UN founded on the ruins of the Second World War. He is, however, the first Secretary General to be elected from the ranks of the United Nations staff. His term expires at end of this year.

Support of the United States is seen as crucial for being catapulted to the position or for re-election to the position of UN Secretary General, although any of the Security Council members could use their veto to shoot down any nomination. US President George W Bush has already voiced his support for Annan's second term in office. The US blocked Annan's predecessor Boutros Boutros-Ghali of Egypt from winning a second term.

By tradition, the secretary general's job rotates every ten years by region, and most Asian countries see it as their turn although contenders are yet to be in the fray.

With Boutros-Ghali's single term and Annan's current tenure, Africa will be having its full share of ten years for the UN position leaving scope for an Asian candidate. The only Asian Secretary General was U Thant from neighboring Myanmar.

## Deaths in manhole

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table fan from their vehicle and tried to flee but fell in the manhole.

As the young man did not come out even after five minutes, Mannan informed the traffic sergeant about it. He contacted fire brigade and Dhanmondi police. "I also told them not to enter the manhole but they did not pay heed to it," the sergeant said.

Two of the technicians entered the manhole and did not come out of it. The other technician then got into it to see what happened with his colleagues. But none of them came out of the manhole.

Fire brigade personnel reached the spot at about noon and attempted to enter the manhole wearing mask and using a ladder.

But finally they did not, fearing there might be live electric wire or poisonous gas in it. They telephoned local power sub-station to cut off power supply in the area.

Later, they lifted the bodies using fire hook and sent those to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue for autopsy.

Supervisor of Bengal Electric Kabir told this correspondent their technical team led by Mannan went to work at Nilkhet at around 10 am. Mannan was residing at Kamrangirchar, he said.

Following the incident, a big crowd gathered at the spot, resulting in traffic jam in the areas.

When contacted, Dhanmondi police said Bengal Electric filed a UD case in this connection.

## MA Hannan airport

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government has undertaken a master plan to develop the seaport.

The prime minister also announced that more hajj flights would operate from this airport from next year.

Referring to the last election results of Awami League in Chittagong, Hasina said although her party could not get many seats from Chittagong, but her government did not hesitate to develop this region.

The Awami League government is doing whatever necessary to make Chittagong a commercial

capital, she said.

The prime minister said without democracy, economic progress is not possible. "We've established rights to ballot and bread, and accountability of parliament, as we want to reach the fruits of independence to the people."

The prime minister said Rangunia EPZ has been established as the first Export Processing Zone in the private sector. This EPZ will open a new door to export as well as processing of information technology through international submarine optic cable.

## Energy issues

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the marginal gas fields. This issue came up while BAPEX was negotiating with Canadian company Niko over three marginal gas fields and suddenly found that the negotiation was not following any clear cut guideline due to lack of a policy regarding such gas fields.

"We have production sharing contract (PSC) for exploration and gas field development, but we don't have a policy under which our national company could form a joint venture with a private company for development of marginal gas fields. In fact, we don't even have a concrete guideline to determine which is a marginal gas field or which is a depleted gas field," said a source.

He added, a committee headed by a deputy secretary of the ministry was now finalising a general

policy regarding marginal gas fields, which would open up new investment opportunities for foreign oil companies.

The energy ministry is also taking some decisions regarding some environment-friendly fuel project - CNG projects - to be implemented with a Chinese company in the country. The Chinese company proposed to set up several CNG feeding-conversion stations in the city, but due to lack of initiative the project has so far made any headway.

Last year, some Japanese investors submitted 11 proposals to the energy ministry, which included some NGL projects. The ministry discussed five projects among them, but these did not proceed to the Economic Relations Division (ERD) for clearance. Decision would be taken over these projects.

## Betrayal won't affect alliance

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Replying to a question about the squabbling in Jatiya Party threatening the unity of the four-party opposition alliance, Bhuiyan said most JP leaders and activists are committed to maintaining unity of the alliance.

"There is nothing to be worried about as the number of pro-unity people is much higher," he added.

Top JP leaders, who attended the CLC meeting, told reporters that JP is very much with the BNP-led alliance and would be with it for the days to come. They said that the party and the alliance would not be affected if anyone within our party betrays or wants to join hands with Awami League.

About removal of party Secretary-General Nazir Rahman Manzur from the party, Jatiya Party Joint-Secretary-General Moidul Islam said this is totally an undemocratic act as he has been elected by the party council.

He said JP leaders and activists will not accept this unconstitutional, undemocratic and imprudent decision and threatened counter-action. JP leaders ABM Golam Mostafa,

Mostafa Jamal Haider, Kazi Firoz Rashid and Saifur Rahman blasted party Chairman HM Ershad and others who, they said, want to create a rift in the opposition alliance.

On a question about Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ultimatum to the BNP chairperson, the BNP secretary-general said by throwing such a challenge the ruling AL has proved that it is very much scared of the opposition's move.

He said opposition's agitation programmes, including fresh call for hartal and the ultimatum were not announced depending on Hasina's words and the programmes are parts of current out-government movement.

"Our action programmes will continue until the Awami League quits," he added.

Bhuiyan said people firmly believe that the prime minister never speaks the truth and never keeps her commitment to them. He said Hasina has proved that she does not want general elections, which is evident in the shift from her Madina statement.

He said the caretaker govern-

ment would get only 54 days even if the AL resigns on April 18 and the election is held on June 12. But it is not possible to hold election in such a short time in Bangladesh.

Bhuiyan also said it is not possible to ensure fair election without recovery of huge illegal arms, recasting of the Election Commission, removal of partisan men from the administration and correction of the voter list.

"It is not possible to clear the huge garbage stacked up by Awami League, complete all the process and hold elections within one month and 24 days. The election cannot be held at the desire of Awami League," he added.

Bhuiyan ruled out any discussion with the ruling party and said that everything, including the election date, would be settled through discussion with the caretaker government.

The CLC meeting, besides discussing the announced programmes, talked mostly about the developments in the JP.

## Black Night

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down, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, then leader of the majority party in the Pakistan Legislative Assembly, declared independence of Bangladesh through EPR wireless and called upon the people to build resistance against the occupation forces before he was arrested.

The Pakistani military regime in a bid to stop the constitutional movement of Bangladesh arrested Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and took him to the then West Pakistan.

Although the military junta took control of the local Press, the foreign journalists including Simon Dring later portrayed the atrocities before the world conscience.

Bangladesh came into being on December 16, 1971 following surrender of the Pakistani occupation forces after a nine-month bloody war.

Different organisations have chalked out elaborate programmes to observe the day in a befitting manner.

## APSU

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the country in the grip of a three-day non-stop hartal, as the four-party opposition alliance has already declared nationwide shutdown on April 1 and 2 on the government's refusal to step down by March 30.

Presided over by President of Islami Chhatra Shibir Nurul Islam Bulbul, the rally was addressed, among others, by Shahabuddin Laltu, Monjur Elahi, ABM Mosharrif Hossain, Manir Hossain, Kabirul Ahsan Shahjada, Jainul Islam, Yusuf Asger, Motahar Hossain Chowdhury, Iftekher Karim Mamun, Abu Taher Khan, Mostafizur Rahman and Shahjahan Ali.

The APSU comprises ten organisations including Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, Jatiya Chhatra Samaj, Islami Chhatra Shibir, Islami Chhatra Majlish, JAGPA Chhatra League, Progotishil Chhatra Dal, Ganotantrik Chhatra League, Islami Chhatra Samaj, Islami Chhatra Shakti and Muslim Chhatra League.

## PM: Challenge

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Hasina said she had requested the opposition leader to give up the politics of hartal and killing and join the election. "But she (Begum Zia) issued the ultimatum to create indiscipline."

She said she had accepted the opposition's demand for an early election and declared a timeframe for transfer of power. "I declared that I will hand over power to a non-party, neutral caretaker government any day after April 17 after observing the Mujibnagar Day," she said.

But, she added, the opposition leader did not accept this proposal and issued the March 30 ultimatum. "Then, why should I resign?"

Pointing to adverse impact of hartal, the Prime Minister said the unity of "vote thieves, rajakars and autocrats" is pushing the country towards destruction by calling unnecessary hartals.

She urged the people to remain united against conspiracies of the opposition alliance.

## US envoy hopes successful election

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make sure that this election is the kind of election they want and deserve.

About the number of US observers, she said "It's really too early for us to say how many we will send... But there are a number of other countries that will also be sending observers."

In reply to a question about functioning of democracy and parliament in Bangladesh she said it is parliament, not the street, that is the place for an opposition and the atmosphere in the parliament, of course, should be conducive to debate.

"We don't think that hartals are an effective measure, and they do exact a very high price from Bangladesh's economy, a price which Bangladesh can ill afford."

Commenting on Dhaka-Washington relations, Mary said, "It is now a mature relationship and

one that is an asset for the United States."

Asked whether there would be any change in the US policy towards Bangladesh with President George W Bush at the White House, the ambassador said there is every reason to believe that the Bush administration would value the United States' relationship with Bangladesh as the Clinton administration did.

About deportation of the condemned killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman or any progress in signing of extradition treaty following Hasina-Clinton talks at White House, the ambassador said she could not comment on the deportation issue because it is in the judicial process in the United States.

But she said Dhaka and Washington are in the process of beginning negotiations on extradition treaty, and disclosed that the

negotiations would begin next month in Washington.

In reply to a question about exporting natural gas of Bangladesh, the ambassador said it is a decision for Bangladesh to make, but Bangladesh ought to take a business-like and hard-headed approach to the issue.

About the recent study of USGS on gas reserves, Mary Ann said parameters of the study were quite conservative and yet it was clear to the geologists who conducted it that Bangladesh ranks quite high among the world's countries in terms of gas reserves.

About US plea for trade unionism in EPZs in Bangladesh and tagging it to GSP facilities, the ambassador said the issue had been resolved with publishing a notice by the government committing to establish full freedom of association in the export processing zones by January 2004.

About duty-and-quota-free export from Bangladesh to the US market, she said duty-free import from Bangladesh by the US could not be looked at until the EPZ issue was resolved.

Asked if US would consider a similar law for Bangladesh like US TDA-2000 that is likely to be a threat for Bangladesh's garment market in USA, Mary Ann said if one looks carefully at the TDA, one would find less to fear than most people in Bangladesh first thought.

She said preferences for the Caribbean countries are not free, they require certification that certain labour standards are met, and they affect exports to the US of goods made of fabric from the US. Other beneficiaries are Sub-Saharan African countries, but they don't really seem to represent serious competition for an industry that is well developed, as Bangladesh's is.