

Thousands line up

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 flags with similar slogans written on them. A blow of whistle signalled the beginning and end of the human chain.

At the end of the demonstration, the protesters came on to the road shouting slogans like 'Down with Khaleda-Nizami regime', 'Shut down Hava Bhaban' and 'Return the wealth of the people' while others sang patriotic songs while passing through on trucks.

Although AL President Sheikh Hasina did not participate in the programme, AL General Secretary Abul Jilil paraded the road from Bangabandhu Avenue to Russell Square.

Jalil told newsmen that the human chain programme was part of the party's move to pull down the government by April through a mass movement including two back-to-back dawn-to-dusk hartals on April 7 and 8. "Our demand is simple -- resignation of the government and midterm elections," he said and congratulated people for making the human chain programme a success.

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, AL organising secretary and political secretary to Sheikh Hasina, said the programme showed the AL does not believe in creating anarchy in the name of politics. He said city residents expressed their non-

confidence in the government by spontaneously participating in the human wall demonstrations. "The AL will soon announce more such anti-government programmes with mass participation of the common people."

No major untoward incidents were reported during the demonstration. Large contingents of riot police and plainclothes detectives were deployed along the roads.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Inu) led by its president Hasanul Huq Inu formed a separate human chain from Dainik Bangla crossing to Motijheel Shapla Chattar demanding resignation of the government.

Vehicular traffic jostled to steer clear of the demonstrators only to clog up the roads in the process.

AL sources said the success of the programme is proof of the main opposition's organisational capability. Top AL leaders joined it in groups at their designated areas.

AL sources claimed that several people were injured when cocktails were thrown at demonstrators led by AL leader Abdur Razzak at Kalyanpur.

Congratulating people for making the "mass no-confidence human wall" a success, AL President Sheikh Hasina asked the BNP-Jamaat alliance government to step down on its own before its too late and "give people a respite from its misrule".

In a statement, she said the alliance government has pushed the country to the verge of destruction through corruption, nepotism, murder, loot, rape, extortion, robberies and abductions.

"The BNP government was compelled to step down on this day (March 30) in 1996. Today, people have once again expressed their non-confidence by standing in protest along the 22-km walk from Pallabi to Bahadur Shah Park," she said.

'Jubo Dal' men beat up 2 cops in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Activists allegedly of the ruling BNP's youth front beat up two sub-inspectors after storming Bheramara Police Station in an afternoon assault yesterday that prompted the arrest of an attacker.

Police captured Majibur Rahman, organising secretary of Bheramara Poura Jubo Dal unit, who allegedly led a group of 12 in the attack at about 2:00pm. Majibur is accused in two other cases. Reason for the attack could not be known.

The Jubo Dal men kicked and punched sub-inspectors Sankar Kumar Ghosh and Abul Hossain Sarif.

Kushtia Superintendent of Police Abus Salam, who arrived at the police station on a visit during the attack, directed police to arrest the escaping gang.

Extortionists

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 towards the Mirpur Mazar. Afsar died on way to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Traders at the shopping complex closed their shops yesterday and staged an impromptu demonstration protesting the murder and demanding arrest and trial of the killers.

Some 30 minutes after killing Afsar, the gang went to Banaful Display Centre at Green Road and threatened to kill the employees there unless they were given Tk 5 lakh by the end of the day, said shop manager Elias.

"For the last one month or so, Ashik, a notorious criminal, had been calling us demanding that we send him Tk 2 lakh. He said he would kill us all if he had to come to get the money," Elias said.

Following repeated threats, the manager of the Banaful sweet shop at Mirpur filed a general diary with Mirpur Police Station on February 27.

Assistant Commissioner of Police (Mirpur Zone) Kamrul Ahsan said a police team was deployed near the shop after the diary was filed, but was withdrawn after a week as the extortionists stopped calling.

A case was filed.

Country set

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 is equivalent to 17 trillion cubic feet of gas. Given the present trend of energy consumption and gas crisis, the mine will become the biggest alternative source of energy in the country.

But there will be an immediate impact of the Tk 1024-crore hard rock mine project that is already extracting granite and selling it to selected consumers.

Three years behind the schedule for its operation and still going through some glitches, the project is all set to start commercial sale of 1.6 million tonnes of granite a year from October.

The project will drastically reduce dependence on hard rock import as it will produce 1.6 million tonnes of granite against an annual demand for 3.4 million tonnes. This will save between \$38 million and \$58 million a year although the granite will not be cheaper than the rocks usually imported from India.

"This is because the project is costly and slow implementation has made it costlier," said a Petrobangla source. "But still it will be a profitable venture."

As per the original contract, the project's North Korean contractor Nannam and its Polish consultant Kopex were supposed to complete the turn-key project in 2001.

But financial crunch of Nannam stalled the progress of work for many months. When the project restarted by extending the contract with Nannam, its cost increased to Tk 1024 crore from Tk 894 crore.

"The project is suffering due to the absence of a consultant for the last one year," said the Petrobangla source. "Petrobangla experts are doing the consultant's job but we really need the original consultant's help."

Although the contract with

Jayanti Murder

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 based on the first information report (FIR), statements of 20 witnesses and the post-mortem report found Azam Reza guilty.

The IO quoting the post-mortem report said, death was due to cerebral failure resulted from head injury, which was homicidal in nature.

Police recovered the body of Jayanti, a teacher of Australian International School, hanging from the ceiling fan in their Banani house on January 9 afternoon. Jayanti's mother filed a General Diary (GD) with Gulshan Police Station, where she mentioned that Azam killed Jayanti to pave the way for making Mimi his life partner. Jayanti's mother filed a case later accusing Azam Reza, his sister Shampa Reza and Afsana Mimi.

Hosts in trouble

FROM PAGE 1
 Rahul Dravid at first slip. Seamer Balaji was successful off only his second ball when he trapped left-hander Imran Farhat (38) lbw to reduce Pakistan to 73 for two.

But Hameed and Inzamam fought back in an attractive 153-minute partnership worth 160 runs.

Inzamam, who had struck centuries in the last two matches in his home town of Multan, got into his stride quickly. The 34-year-old Inzamam, nicknamed "Sultan of Multan" by local fans, brought up his half-century off 76 balls with a single off-leg-spinner Kumble.

But just when he was looking dangerous, Inzamam was given out caught at forward short-leg off Kumble. Television replays, however, suggested the batsman might have been unlucky.

Rokan reiterates pledge to remove 'corrupt judge'

UNB, Dhaka

Re-elected Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) President Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud yesterday said his insistence on removing an additional judge of the High Court for fixing bail and bringing transparency to appointment of judges earned him lawyers' confidence.

Talking to newsmen after his panel's (Sammilita Ainjibi Samannay Parishad) sweeping victory in March 28-29 polls, Rokan listed the achievements during his first term. "I strongly supported separation and independence of the judiciary, transparency in appointment and promotion of judges without taking political affiliation into account and upholding the rule of law."

"Constitution of the Supreme Judicial Council to probe allegation of corruption against judges is an outcome of my struggle. Upon our constant pressure, the government was compelled to form the Judicial Service Commission for recruitment of judges in the lower courts, meeting partially our goal of separation of the judiciary," he added.

Rokan referred to the government's foot-dragging on acting on a Supreme Judicial Council report and said it was heavily telling upon the public coffers. The controversial additional judge is enjoying all the benefits from the public funds since October last year.

"The delay in taking action in this sensitive issue might be the main reason for the election debacle of the government-backed panel...the SJC cannot be a rehabilitation centre for corrupt judges," he said pointing finger at the controversial additional judge Syed Shahidur Rahman.

Supply from Jalalabad gas field disrupted

UNB, Dhaka

Gas supply from Unocal's Jalalabad field yesterday remained suspended for over an hour, disrupting power generation.

The disorder forced the Power Development Board (PDB) to go for a fresh 400mw loadshedding against the projected 200mw. The power outage in the peak evening hours stood at 600 mw.

Capital Dhaka was also spared the severe loadshedding, as people from various areas complained of untold sufferings in this hot and humid weather in absence of power, coupled with water scarcity.

The countryside also suffered from loadshedding during the peak time of irrigation. Production in a number of industrial areas was hampered.

PDB officials said the peak-hour demand of electricity yesterday was projected at 3,400mw plus. They were expecting to generate 3,200mw in the peak hours enforcing a 200mw loadshedding.

All govt offices

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 secretary to the prime minister, who launched the facility at the Secretariat, stressed use of ICT as a tool for development and speeding up administrative communications.

Establishment Secretary Sarfaraj Hossain and secretaries of different ministries and other high government officials were present.

Ulfa issue

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 "Bangladesh has got the text of the proposed extradition treaty as well as mutual legal assistance treaty and we are hoping these will be signed soon," Shashank told Indian Express.

The Indian foreign secretary, however, said it was too early to talk about modalities for the return of the Ulfa leaders.

New Delhi alleges its northeastern insurgents find shelter in Bangladesh, but Dhaka maintains it will never allow its territory to be used for anti-Indian activities.

Dhaka firm

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 Reduction in Shanghai, were discussed.

The ambassador termed Bangladesh a trusted friend of China and said co-operation in various sectors of economic development of Bangladesh would be expanded and increased in a bigger way.

The prime minister hoped that the excellent bilateral relations would expand and consolidate further to bring the two people more closer.

Mentioning the investment-friendly atmosphere and incentive packages for investment, she hoped that China would invest in Bangladesh availing itself of the opportunities.

Ambassador Chai Xi apprised the prime minister about the poverty reduction conference, to be organised by the World Bank on May 25 this year, and said the people of China eagerly awaits once again to welcome and greet Khaleda Zia.

Appreciating Bangladesh' achievement in poverty reduction and microcredit, he observed that other countries could also follow Bangladesh.

Bangladesh's participation in the upcoming world conference will benefit other countries in alleviating poverty, he said.

Ambassador Chai Xi conveyed greetings to the Chinese leaders to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

CU students

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wounded in the attack. Of them, Zulfikar, Ripa Sardar, Mohiuddin Mohi, Amzad and Russell were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

Many students alleged JCD goons attacked general students in presence of CU Proctor Prof Mujibur Rahman and police, who did not resist the ruling BNP's student wing cadres.

Protesting the attack, the GSAC called an indefinite strike at the CU from today and announced their six-point demand including removal of the proctor, provost and house tutor of Shamsunnahar Hall and bringing transparency to appointment of judges earned him lawyers' confidence.

Meanwhile, the GSAC declared Prof Dr Siddique Ahmed Chowdhury, provost of Shamsunnahar Hall and the proctor unwanted on the campus.

They also vowed to launch agitation against the vice-chancellor if their demands were not met.

Vice-chancellor Prof AJM Nuruddin Chowdhury, who rushed from Dhaka in the morning hearing the volatile campus situation, told reporters, "We have invited agitating students for a dialogue to solve the problem."

However, he brushed aside the possibility of closing the university soon.

Prof Nuruddin was also holding a meeting with resident students of Shamsunnahar Hall, which continued till the writing of this report at 7:30 last evening.

Additional police forces were deployed on the campus to avert any untoward incident.

Reforms fail to rein

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 University said the reform programmes failed to boost employment generation and help the manufacturing sector grow. As a result, poverty level in the country remained almost static, he added.

Summing up the report, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) Research Director Rushidan Islam Rahman said employment generation largely depended on skill development and, so, both the issues must be addressed simultaneously.

"Economic liberalisation has badly affected the employment situation," she noted, adding a large segment of the workforce was involved in low-productivity employment because of a huge mass of surplus labour and lack of skills.

Rushidan pointed out, according to a survey of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics in 1999-2000, 32 percent of the total workforce in Bangladesh were under-employed, meaning working less than 35 hours a week.

The survey also found 8.4 percent of the male labour force as underemployed, compared to a massive 71.2-percent female underemployment.

The BIDS director urged the policymakers to recognise training and skill development as one of the

Biman's DC-10 survives scare

UNB, Dhaka

After flying over the sky of Dhaka for quite sometime, a DC-10 aircraft of Biman Bangladesh Airlines landed safely as one of its engines that developed technical fault was shut down.

Sources at the state-run airlines said the flight from Dubai landed at Zia International Airport at about 2:40pm.

As news spread from the control tower, the airport officials took all-out measures and fire fighting units from various points also rushed to the airport bracing for an emergency.

The pilot, however, immediately shut down the faulty engine and managed to land the aircraft safely.

BGMEA wants

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 against the national interest is not desirable.

Responding to a demand of the BGMEA, the prime minister announced that a national coordination committee will be formed soon to help the garment sector face the post-2004 challenges when the quota system will be phased out.

The committee comprising representatives from the ministries of commerce, finance, textile and shipping and other departments concerned and the BGMEA will find ways and means to protect readymade garment sector in the post-2004 period.

The delegation placed a number of demands including establishment of a central bonded warehouse to the prime minister.

The BGMEA leaders hoped that the government would take some policy decisions for survival and flourishing of the garment sector.

They lauded Khaleda Zia for keeping garment industry out of the purview of hartal when she was in the opposition.

The prime minister said the government gives highest priority to garment sector as it has created employment for a large number of people, including women, and is playing a significant role in the overall economic growth.

Assuring the BGMEA leaders of all-out cooperation of the government to face the post-2004 challenges, the prime minister said she discusses about expansion of

around 2:00pm.

Shumi, Tania, Mamun, Joshi Chakma, Shilpi, Suchy, Nandita, Monti Boishnah, SCF leader Monzurul Haque, Helal and Prabir were treated at CU medical centre after these attacks.

Earlier on Monday, female students locked Shafiqul Islam, house tutor of Shamsunnahar Hall, inside his office for seven hours from 7:00pm as JCD leaders Runa and Mamun threw out the luggage of Shimu from room No. 310 and forced her out.

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GP employees' house in Mirpur looted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Robbers yesterday looted valuables reportedly worth around Tk 11 lakh from the house of a GreenPhone (GP) employee in Mirpur Section-10.

Cutting the kitchen window grill at house No. 5, road No. 2, block B, a gang of four entered the first floor house of Zakaria Hossain Khan at around 3:00am when he and his nephew Ferdous Alam were sleeping.

Zakaria filed an FIR (first information report) with Mirpur Police Station, which said, "We heard some noise from the kitchen and suddenly four armed robbers held us at gunpoint."

The gang threatened to shoot if they made any sound. The robbers also tied their hands with rope and locked them inside a room, it added.

The gang looted most household electronic goods including TV, personal computer, lap-top computer.

However, police failed to recover the goods till 6:00 in the evening.

Outlaw leader slaughtered in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A gang belonging to an outlawed organisation yesterday hacked to death another underground outfit leader at Bera in Pabna.

The gang captured Yaar Khan, 27, in Ayenkhar Dol area under Masudiya union when was passing the area. They slaughtered him and dumped his body in a lake, locals said.

Yaar was a listed criminal of Bera Police Station and an accused in various criminal cases including of murders, police said.

Human dev status

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workforce.

Hossain Zillur Rahman of Power and Participation Research Centre said increase of literacy rate and women workforce and lowering of fertility rate are some successes of Bangladesh.

"These achievements would be jeopardised if we fail to minimise the existing pervasive income gap between the rich and poor," he said. "Economic growth must be pro-poor."

"Bangladesh has come out of the vicious circle of famine as the farmers have doubled rice production over the last two decades," he mentioned.

Presiding over the session, Kholiquzzaman, chairman of Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad, said economic growth will be of little significance unless the income inequality is removed.

Vice-chancellor of Dhaka University SMA Faiz inaugurated the workshop. Country representative of the UNFPA Suneeta Mukherjee spoke as a special guest.

Met office

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 Shahnaz Begum, a BADC official, however, said the Boro cultivation scenario doesn't look too bad. "I have already visited some places. The condition is not so bad. At some places, the grains have dried up, but largely the condition is good."

She said the government has already announced a Tk 300 crore subsidy for farmers and directed the department to take special measures in case there is any chance of production loss.

A large number of irrigation equipment is required in the dry season, said a source in the BADC. Last year, farmers used as many as 23,434 deep tube wells, 9,242 shallow tube wells, 79,850 low lift pumps and 22 floating pumps.

Also, 13,055 hand-operated pumps, 4,965 artesian wells and 6,509 dug wells helped irrigation in 32,511 hectares of land, he said, adding the requirement of pumps increases every year.

Out of 75 lakh hectares of arable land, 40,18,237 hectares have been brought under IRR1- Boro cultivation in 2003-04.

Aminul Haq, chief engineer of Bangladesh Water Development Board, did not admit there was drought-like situation in the country. He said the authorities were rather preparing for a flood, adding that a flood information centre will be opened on the first day of April.

Men flee

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 Some of the families paid them after negotiating the amount while those who failed to come up with the money are fleeing the villages.

People of Assesuni upazila are living in fear under the tyranny of the outlaws who regularly visit the villages brandishing firearms to extort money.

Locals alleged that police did not take any action to protect villagers although a list of the criminals was submitted to them following the murder of police informer Haroon Dhali a few months ago at Budhata of the same upazila.

Police said additional police were deployed in the area to protect villagers.

Old Dhaka stop

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Killers' -- in shell-shocked Old Dhaka, a hotbed of attacks on businesspeople and businesses.

The area with a matrix of streets and lanes sank into gloom because of the strike: only signs of life came from southbound travellers using Sadarghat launch terminal.

"It's not a simple case of extortion... most businesspeople don't have the courage to stand up against such criminals," Rouf said. "Political instability is to blame for the recent killings in our area. I don't blame any party in particular, but both opposition and ruling parties have to share the responsibility for what is happening."

THREATENING CALLS

In the wake of a case filed against Kajal as the prime suspect after remains of the 56-year-old and his 29-year-old son were retrieved in Gazipur on Sunday, threatening phone calls from unnamed persons scared their family and raised serious concern about security.

"You didn't do right by filing the case. You have other children to think and worry about," a caller told Haq's wife before she hung up in fear.

"We have alerted police... we are worried about our security," said Yasmin, the eldest daughter of Haq.

Ministers and political leaders and activists of all hues continued to pour in Haq's home in the old quarter of the city to offer condolences to the family numbed by the macabre incident that was brought to light in a morning find on Sunday.

Police recovered the bodies of Haq and Russell in more than 250 pieces two days after their driver was found hacked to death in a car on the far outskirts of Dhaka on Friday.

"We want nothing but the killers to be hanged. We want justice. Can you promise that?" Yasmin asked State Minister for Home Affairs Lufozzaman Babar when he visited the family. Accompanied by Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Babar assured her of justice.

Emerging from the house, the state minister repeated: "Spreading alarm among people is the implications of these attacks. We will track down who are behind the killings as our investigations reveal more in time."

The mayor chimed in: "Other businessmen should not be alarmed as the murders took place out of a dispute between two partners."

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon and other top 11-party left alliance leaders, who visited the family at the same time, differed with the state minister later.

"It has nothing to do with fear. If political activists are allowed to roam even after being accused of murdering Sergeant Farhad, they will con-

Annan spares

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 union expressed fury at Annan's decision.

"There are 22 people dead and senior UN officials get to retire with their pensions," Guy Candusso, the union's first vice president, told AFP. "They still have to answer for their role."

The latest report will not be made public but a summary given to journalists paints a devastating picture of UN operations after the world body returned to Iraq following the ouster of Saddam Hussein in the US-led war.

Echoing another inquiry released last year, an investigative panel found evidence of "lethargy that is bordering on gross negligence" and a repeated failure by UN staff to appreciate the extent of the security risks.

"This false sense of security was a state of mind that was shared by all the senior UN political and humanitarian staff in Iraq," the report said.

It also found "conflicting statements" by UN security staff and the US military over whether the United Nations had asked the United States to vacate personnel and equipment from the hotel area before the attack.

Criminals Joseph, Mamun

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 absentia. This is the first time that a tribunal handed down death sentence to Joseph and Mamun.

The court fined the convicts with life term Tk 50,000 each and they will have to be in jail for one more year in default.

The convicts with death can appeal to the High Court against the verdict in seven days and the punishment of the fugitives will be effective from the date of their arrest or surrender, the judgement said.

Judge AR Masud of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-4 gave the verdict at a packed courtroom at 11:45am. He observed the victim's deposition on deathbed before a magistrate two days after he was shot points to the fact that Joseph, Haris, Munna, Mamun, Shahin and Paris shot the victim.

Moreover, Joseph is an accused in 19 cases and Mamun in three cases, including of murder and illegal possession of arms.