

Focus on election-'91

Survey of 522 candidates

Majority for Bangladeshi nationalism

By Staff Correspondent

A survey of 522 candidates contesting the ensuing election from 100 constituencies has revealed that 47 per cent of them are in favour of 'Bangladeshi Nationalism' while 35 per cent favour 'Bangalee Nationalism'. Seventeen per cent were in favour of 'Bangladeshi Muslim Nationalism' while 1.5 of those surveyed had no response.

The survey of the candidates was conducted by Gnanantrik Uddayag and Market Research Consultants of Bangladesh with financial assistance of Ford Foundation.

The survey also revealed that 63 per cent of the candidates were in favour of a parliamentary system of govern-

ment. Twenty-three per cent of the candidates belonging to BNP and 25 per cent of the Jatiya Party candidates were also in favour of the parliamentary system.

The research also indicated that 53.97 per cent candidates belonging to Jamaat support the parliamentary form of government while 15.87 per cent are in favour of Presidential system.

The survey was revealed at a press conference held at the Jatiya Press Club Tuesday. It was addressed by renowned drama artist Sara Zaker, Economist Dr. Sajeda Amin, Sara Hossain, Meghna Ghuha Thakurata and Tahmina Rah-

man. About 67 per cent candidates hold the opinion that 'religious faith is a personal matter and the State has nothing to say', on the other hand 83 per cent of Jamaat candidates and 53 per cent of Jatiya Party candidates opposed this.

The survey shows that 52 per cent of BNP candidates have changed their party while 73 per cent did so in case of Jatiya Party. Sixty three per cent candidates never changed their party affiliation.

The trend of shifting political loyalty was negligible in case of Awami League, Jamaat, Communist Party and other left leaning parties.

The study further shows

that 65 per cent of the candidates opposed the incorporation of Islam as State religion in the 8th Amendment.

Absence of democratic system was considered the major problem of the country by the candidates belonging to Awami League, CPB and Five-Party alliance. Five-Party alliance candidates also underlined the economic exploitation of the poor class by the affluent.

Jamaat candidates on this issue remarked that the deviation from Islamic ideology was the root cause of all problems in this country while a good number from all parties and among independent candidates considered the population boom as the major issue confronting the nation.

NGOs

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for making a video recording during the polls. Meanwhile the various NGOs interested in overseeing the polls—watch should be carried out and insiders say that this division may be due to matters involving self interests.

At the initial stages all the interested NGOs met at the invitation of a poll-watching organisation named Free Election Movement but CCHRB later moved away saying that many of the NGOs had no idea about poll-watching. However it agreed to work together but submit a separate report. The proposal was not accepted. Many of the NGOs including association for Development Agencies of Bangladesh (ADAB) remained with the Free Election Movement and decided to conduct a separate Taka 25 lakh fund raising programme.

They sought financial assistance of Taka 14 lakh from NORAD, and Taka 10 lakh from Pact Bangladesh—an organisation of USAID, showing that they have engaged about 25,000 workers throughout the country to watch the polls.

But the donors wanted to see the official authorisation of the Election Commission as a pre-condition to releasing the funds.

The NGOs are now pressuring the Election Commission to give them no objection certificates for watching the polls. But the Election Commission refused to do so on the plea that there was, no such provision.

Insiders say that neither the Free Election Movement nor ADAB has done virtually anything to organise any working group.

When the chairman of the Free Election Movement K.M. Sobhan was contacted, he told the Daily Star that they had made a budget of Taka 25 lakhs but could not get the funds from any donor. He said that his organisation has engaged 25,000 workers to watch the polls.

He said that the activities of his organisation depended on getting funds from the donors.

Polls-monitoring was introduced in 1986 by People's Commission, which invited a British Parliamentarian and a foreign journalist to observe the third parliament elections. In 1988 the National Democratic Institute (NDI) of United States observed the fourth parliament elections while in 1990 the NDI and CCHRB separately made their observations on upazilla elections.

After the announcement of the date for the fifth parliamentary elections this year the voluntary organisations became very active to oversee the polls.

Targets bombed

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In the northern Gulf, state-of-the-art Allied minesweepers intensified efforts to find and explode mines.

The missile cruiser USS Princeton, a billion-dollar warship, was sent to a Gulf port for damage assessment. US military officials said it was badly damaged by a mine on Monday.

The other US vessel damaged Monday was the USS Tripoli, helicopter assault carrier serving as flagship for the newly mounted mine-clearing operation. Iraq's formidable ground forces have lain low during the air bombardment. But the country's military newspaper said Tuesday that if a land battle comes, Iraq will prevail.

Reuter reports: US Marines bombed Iraqi targets in occupied Kuwait with heavy artillery fire for the second successive day Tuesday.

A pool press report said a battalion-sized task force of the First Marine Division pounded bunkers and troop concentrations just across the front line, south of Al-Wafra oil field.

At least seven secondary explosions were set off by the shelling, indicating munitions, fuel or equipment had been destroyed, but there were no accurate assessments of damage or casualties.

Meanwhile, Iraqi forces shot down another US A-10 combat support aircraft during operations in the Kuwait theatre, a US military spokesman said Tuesday.

Brigadier General Richard Neal, Deputy Director of Operations at the US Command in Riyadh said the status of the A-10's pilot was not yet known. He would only say that the aircraft was shot down during the previous 24 hours.

More than 30 explosions rocked the Rashid Hotel, forcing most of the 40 foreign journalists staying there to retreat to basement shelters. They said the bombing was so intense that they breathed smoke from the blasts.

Iraq today warned the Allied forces they were in for "frightening surprises" if they carried on with the Gulf war.

72 foreign polls observers arrive here today

Seventy-two foreign observers will oversee the country's February 27 parliamentary polls, reports UNB.

They will begin arriving in Dhaka from today (Wednesday). An official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Tuesday of them, the SAARC will send a 31-member team, while the Commonwealth Secretariat a group of 21 legal experts and officials.

Besides, the Japanese parliament (Diet) will send a 9-member delegation.

Six members will come from the Washington based National Democratic Institute, four from the British parliament and one from European Parliament.

Menon pledges to remain with working class

LAKSHMIPUR, Feb 19: Five-Party leader Rashed Khan Menon today said the candidates from his alliance, if elected, would raise peoples' problems in the Parliament, reports UNB.

The alliance leaders would always remain with the working class people in their struggle of emancipation as they did in the past, Menon pledged at an election rally in Lakshmipur-Raipur constituency this afternoon.

Workers' Party President Abul Bashar, who is a Five-Party candidate for the constituency, also addressed the rally.

Bashar said the Five-Party being the platform of the working class would fulfil all the pledges it made for the welfare of the masses.

Atrash Pir

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27 elections and had advised his disciples to vote for the Zaker Party.

He said that the Zaker Party has been floated to foil conspiracies to delete 'Bismillah' from the Constitution and face threats against Islam.

"I am a man from the spiritual platform. But can anyone remain silent when Islam is threatened", the Pir Shaheb asked adding that the Zaker Party wants peace.

Replying to a question the Pir Shaheb said he feels that the prospect of unity of the nationalist and Islam-minded parties is still there. There could be unity both before and after the elections, he said.

The four-day Urs which concluded on Tuesday was attended by lakhs of disciples and admirers of the Pir Shaheb from all over the country. High civil and military officials were among them. There were also visitors from a number of foreign countries including Pakistan and India.

He said his mission is to spread the message of the peace of Islam. The huge Biswa Zaker Manzil complex on 68 acres of land will be run by a trust in his absence, he said. The complex includes an All-level madrasa, a hospital and an under construction mosque.

The entire complex has been established with donations and labour given by his disciples called 'zakeran'. They are the owners of Biswa Zaker Manzil, the Pir Shaheb said adding that he never received any donation from any government for the complex.

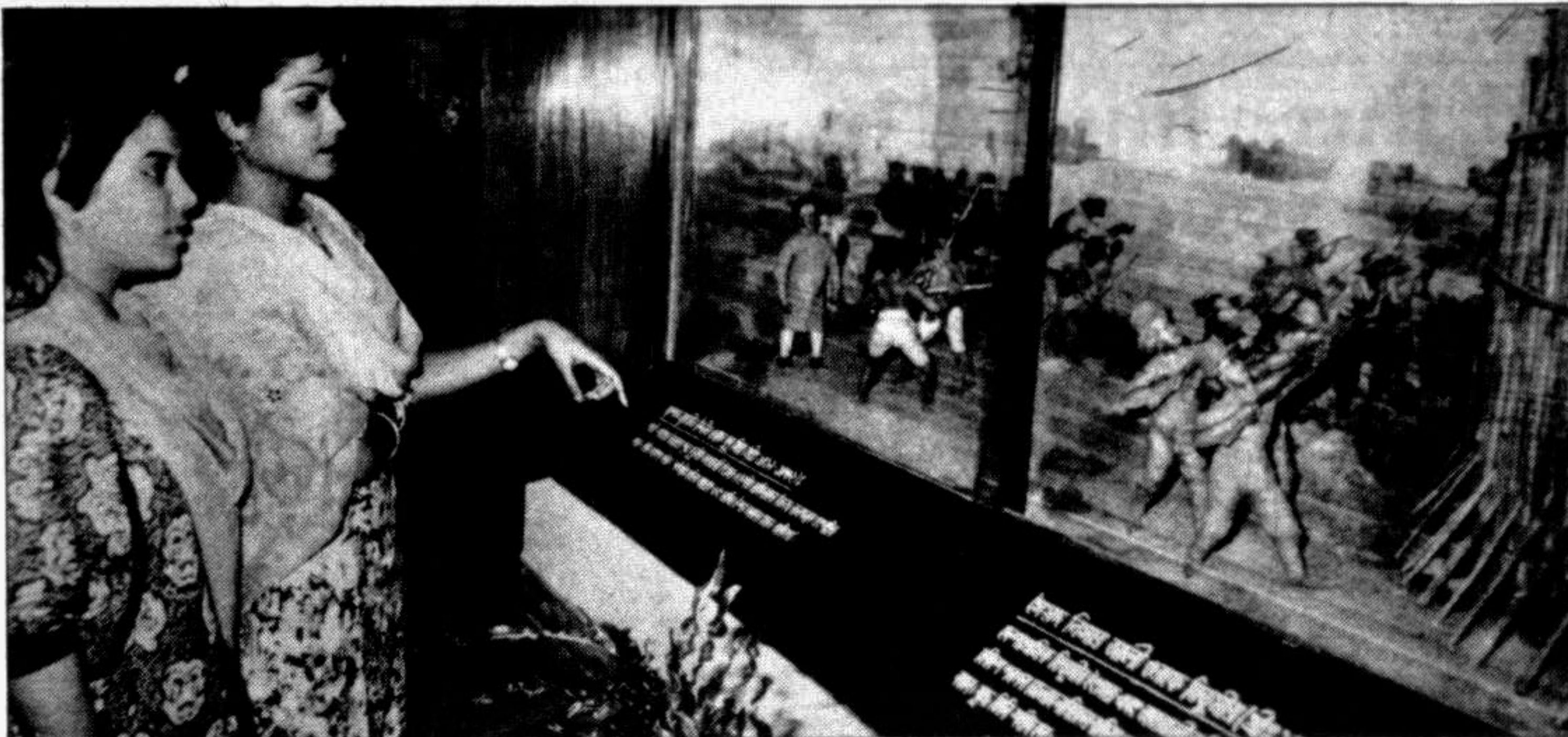
Consolidate victory

From Page 1 Col 5 added her party was committed to save the country by reviving the 19-point programme and politics of development launched by late President Zia.

Begum Zia said BNP had kept its promise by not compromising with the autocratic regime of Ershad like other political parties and continued the democratic movement for last nine years to dislodge Ershad from power. We will also translate into reality our commitments to the nation if we are voted to power, she added.

Among others, BNP candidates from Demra Salahuddin Ahmed and Amanullah Aman from Keraniganj, DUCSU general secretary Khairul Kabir Khokon and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal joint convenor Fazlul Milon addressed the meeting.

BSS adds: Begum Khaleda Zia later addressing a large election meeting at Brahmanbaria said if voted to power, her government would ensure peace in all spheres of life and restore all the



Two visitors at the museum for children which was opened at the Bangla Academy premises in Tuesday —Star photo

Nothing less than independence, Sikh militants tell Shekhar

CHANDIGARH(India), Feb 19: Five leading Sikh militant groups today rejected Indian Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's offer of talks to end a decade-old independence campaign in which thousands of people have been killed, reports Reuter.

Nothing less than independence would satisfy them and Sikh political leader Simranjit Singh Mann should stop telling them to talk, they said in a joint statement issued in Chandigarh, the capital of

Sikh-majority Punjab state. "We know how to move forward to our goal", they said, apparently referring to the continuation of the violent campaign.

The militant groups said they had held a joint meeting on the subject in Punjab recently. Shekhar, they said, could not deliver peace.

Shekhar is head of a fragile minority government supported by the Congress Party, the biggest in Parliament, whose leader Rajiv Gandhi has

criticised him for seeking to open peace talks.

"Chandra Shekhar is flying on borrowed wings and we know he cannot do us any good at all. The man who lives on borrowed breath can hardly give anything to anyone," the militants said.

Mann, who met Shekhar on December 28 to demand "self-determination" for the Sikhs after reuniting the fragmented Sikh Akali Dal Party, was also criticised.

Jamaat not a communal party : Abbas

By Staff Correspondent

Acting Ameer of Jamaat-Islami Abbas Ali Khan said basic needs of the people will be fulfilled if his party was voted to power.

He was inaugurating an eye-camp at Panchebibi in Joy-purhat on Tuesday.

The Jamaat leader said, Islam was a complete code of life and was beneficial to all irrespective of Muslim or non-Muslim.

Refuting the allegation that Jamaat was a communal party Khan said it was a propaganda aimed at tarnishing the party's image.

He urged the people to vote for Jamaat nominees to establish the law of Allah and rule of the honest man.

'Blank portion' programme postponed

The leaders of the federation of journalists, press workers and general employees in the newspaper industry have decided to postpone their programme of keeping the upper portion of the fold in the eighth column of the first page blank from Tuesday in the light of taking preparations for waging greater movement including strike, reports BSS.

Meanwhile, a BFUJ press release said the leaders have continued their discussion with the concerned quarters on the declared greater programme.

Human rights

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The report stated that the interim government lifted formal and informal restrictions on the press when it assumed office.

The report further noted that there are major restrictions in Bangladesh on women's and workers' rights as well as problems of arbitrary detentions, prisoner abuse and deaths in police custody.

There was a number of credible reports of deaths of persons in 1989 and 1990 while in police custody. There was also periodic violence on

university campuses as student wings of various political parties clashed repeatedly, causing injuries and sometimes deaths.

Although the Constitution forbids torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment or treatment, police treatment of accused criminals and other detainees, including those held on political charges, is usually rough and can include torture and other abusive treatment during interrogations.

Beginning in January, 1990, Amnesty International published a special paper on four cases in which persons died while in police custody. The Government maintains that in three of these cases the victims died as a result of beatings by persons other than the police prior to their arrest. In the fourth case the Govern-

ment admitted probable police brutality but there was no indication that charges had been filed by year's end.

The Government has not interfered with human rights groups' inquiries into cases of prisoner abuse but seldom undertakes its own investigation and seldom punishes those responsible for such abuses. Apparently in response to reports of prisoner abuse, the Home Affairs Minister now requires a magistrate's investigation of any deaths in police custody.

The state of emergency in effect from November 27 until December 5 permitted arrests for strikes, processions, political or labour activities, or for making or printing statements against the Government. There were reports of resulting arrests, but the number and disposition of the cases in unknown.

Bush rejects Soviet plan

From Page 1 Col 7 eign Minister, called on the allies to hold off on any ground offensive.

"If we start a ... land operation, without replying to the Gorbachev plan, and without knowing what the reaction has been of Iraq to this, then we would be assuming a great responsibility in history," Primakov said in an interview with the US television network ABC.

The Foreign Ministers of the 12 European Community nations met in Luxembourg on Tuesday to discuss the Soviet plan and their own post-war scenario for the Middle East.

"The key (to peace) rests with the Iraqis, as it always has," British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said upon his arrival. "I don't think there is any case" for a lull in the war.

A Soviet official said Tuesday that Moscow demands an end to Iraqi missile attacks on Israel as part of its Gulf peace proposal.

Iran's Foreign Minister Velayati said Tuesday that Iraq is ready to work toward a political end to the Gulf war, which he said must include unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait.

Ali Akbar Velayati told reporters he had met Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz before leaving Tehran for Germany on Sunday and was ready to pursue further peace talks involving Iraq.

Velayati stressed that foreign forces must withdraw from the region as part of any political resolution of the Gulf crisis.

His comments, on the second day of a visit to Germany for talks about the war and bilateral relations, came as Iraq was considering a four-point Soviet plan to end the war.

Velayati said the United States and its allies must show the same willingness to negotiate a political solution as Iraq or face "the beginning of more tension in our region."

Velayati in Bonn

AP reports from Bonn:

UK-US talks

Xinhua reports: Britain held

The Midnight File

23 killed in Xian bridge collapse

HONG KONG, Feb 19: A suspension bridge crowded with Chinese celebrating the Lunar New Year collapsed near the ancient city of Xian, killing at least 23 people and injuring more than 100 others. The newspapers, quoting China's semi-official Hong Kong News Agency, said authorities blamed the accident last Friday on a large holiday crowd that had crammed the bridge to get a better view of a popular Taoist temple.

Xian, a former Chinese capital in the central province of Shaanxi, is a popular tourist city, famed for its emperor's tomb filled with thousands of life-sized terra cotta warriors.

Iraqi murdered in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO, Feb 19: The body of a 34-year-old Iraqi Shaikh Ahamed was found Monday in a field near Wandurumulla village, 22 kilometers (13 miles) southeast of Colombo five days after he was stabbed to death, police said Tuesday. Ahamed was married to a Sri Lankan woman he had met in Kuwait. The couple, who have two children, came to Sri Lanka soon after Iraqi invaded Kuwait in August last year, reports AP.

Nujoma reshuffles cabinet

WINDHOEK, Feb 19: Namibian President Sam Nujoma today announced a cabinet reshuffle and the creation of two more ministerial posts to ease the workload of some of his ministers. At a press conference here, Nujoma said two ministries, agriculture, fisheries, water and rural development, and education, culture, youth and sports, would be split in two and two new ministers appointed, reports AFP.

Roh apologises for scandal

SEOUL, Feb 19: President Roh Tae-woo apologised on national television Tuesday for a bribery scandal involving a key aide and parliamentary leaders that has tarnished his administration. The scandal is the largest and most serious since Roh took office in 1988. It comes as South Korea is preparing for four elections in the next two years, reports AP.

Stoned to death for rape

PESHAWAR, Feb 19: Thousands of people watched as tribal leaders stoned to death a man convicted of raping a young woman. Police dragged Bahadar Khan to a parched plain in the heart of the Khyber pass on Monday where his accusers stoned him until he died, according to the independent newspaper, The Nation. Khan, trial was conducted by a jirga or council of tribal elders, a traditional law-making body among tribal people where country's legislature has little control, reports AP.

Jackson on US postmark

INDIANAPOLIS (Indiana) Feb 19: American Civil rights leader Jesse Jackson 49, on Monday became the first living Black and only the second living person to be honoured on a US postmark. At a postal service ceremony honouring a "Blacks on stamps" series, the postmark—the stamp cancellation mark on an envelope—showed Jackson's likeness in a collage with other Black leaders such as the reverend Martin Luther King, reports Reuter.

Four killed in South Africa

JOHANNESBURG, Feb 19: Four people died in unrelated violence on opposite ends of the country. A police report said two people burned to death in a firebomb attack on a house in the Khayelitsha black township near Cape Town. Three people were injured and 15 dwellings burned down in the township. Two men were arrested. In eastern Natal Province, two men died when a group fired on them near Durban, reports AP.

Smuggled textiles

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prise mostly of 20 looms. These small industries, identified as the backbone of the textile sector, were established since 1982 as a result of government's industrialisation policy to encourage the sector.

After the growth of export-oriented garments industry, duty-free fabrics continued to make inroads into the country. A conservative statistics say at least 30 crore metres fabrics are being smuggled into the country through various means. Excess fabrics are being brought which are regularly marketed in Dhaka city and elsewhere in the country. Is-lampur is the main point wherefrom foreign fabrics are channelled throughout the country at regular interval, the sources say.

Many locally produced fabrics can compete with the imported ones but the garment industry owners are not ready to buy it as profits from back-door sales of the imported fabrics are too high, the sources say.

The Specialised Textile Mills Owners Association executives say the local mills can definitely manufacture common types of fabrics which are used in the garments industry. Picketing, interlining and sheeting cloth, manufactured locally, are of high quality and there is no justification of im-

porting these fabrics, for use in the garments industry, they said.

They said, due to high tariff costs, the local fabrics could not be sold at a cheaper rate compared to duty-free garment materials. If they are allowed to supply 10 crore metres of fabrics to the garments industry out of 90 crore metres now being imported for the garments industry, an amount of Tk 300 crore in foreign exchange could be saved. Fresh employment generation and social services could be ensured in the country, they added.

Ekushey

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The Language Movement was the first outburst of the feeling of our separate entity which developed through political movements of the fifties and sixties and culminated in the emergence of Bangladesh through the War of Liberation in 1971.

The programmes of the day begins at one minute past midnight today at the central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka. People from all walks of life and ages will go to the Minar and the mazzars of the Shaheeds at Azimpur graveyard in barefoot processions to offer fataha and place wreaths.

Special forces

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The Presiding Officers have power to suspend or adjourn polling whenever disorder hampers normal voting.

Six crore twenty two lakh voters will exercise their right to franchise in the polls to elect three hundred Members of Parliament. A Total of 380,000 officials are going to be directly involved in the election process this time.

Among others, the meeting was attended by Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen M Nooruddin Khan, Chief of Naval Staff Rear Admiral Amir Ahmed Mustafa, Chief of Air Staff Air Vice-Marshal Muntazuddin Ahmed, Principal Secretary to the President, Khorshed Alam, Cabinet Secretary Siddiqueur Rahman, Home Secretary M A Sayeed, Secretary, Election Commission Secretariat, Md Ayubur Rahman, Director General of BDR Maj Gen Abdul Latif, Director General of Ansars and VDP Major General Mahbubur Rahman and Inspector General of Police A M Chowdhury.

Hasina

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200 seats for amending the Constitution to switch over to parliamentary form and to establish people's government ending the 'Zia-Ershad system'.

Hasina cautioned the people that the country might go back to a dark era of misrule if BNP or JP are voted to power.

"I have nothing to gain or lose, my struggle is aimed at realising the cause of people", she added.

Hasina said there is no difference between BNP and the Jatiya Party as "both originated in the cantonment".

Ershad rehabilitated BNP and provided all facilities to Begum Zia, she said. "Both Zia and Ershad plundered foreign aid and national wealth, thus crippling the national economy."

The rally held at the Kotlaipura College ground was preside over by local Awami League President Hemanta Kumar Adhikari.

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