meet with

counterpart

Foreign Minister ASM

By Staff Correspondent

Mustafizur Rahman told the

Jatiya Sangsad on Sunday

Bangladesh Rifles has taken up

the reported kidnapping of 12

Bangladeshi fishermen from

South Talpatty island on

February 21 with its Indian

Making a statement in the

House he said the BDR came to

know about the incident from

another fishermen. The

veracity of the verbal report of

the fisherman, however, could

The BDR has had a flag

meeting with its Indian coun-

terpart and requested an

explanation on the incident,

Sheikh Razzak Ali rejected

four adjournment notices on

the incident, and Jamaat par-

liamentary group leader Matiur

Rahman Nizami rose to

emphasise the importance of

ted an adjournment notice on

the problem-ridden road

communication between Dhaka

and the southern part of

Bangladesh. The notice was

given by Riasat Ali. Eighteen

other adjournment notices

submitted Saturday were

He also admitted a call at-

tention notice given by Begum

Hafiza Asma Khatun of Jamaat

on oppression of women and

rehabilitation of women

separated from their husbands.

Twentytwo other call attention

Call for indefinite

strike at medical,

dental colleges

By SSMC Correspondent

College Chhatra Otkya Parishad

on Sunday called for an indefi-

ntte strike at all medical and

dental colleges of the country

demanding cancellation of

The decision was taken at a

Professional examinations

The meeting observed with

meeting of the parishad held

have been exempted from the

grave concern that despite

cancellation of the new cur-

riculum by the Board of

Medical and Dental Colleges

(BMDC) the authorities were

yet to implement the BMDC's

Hasina's public

meet tomorrow

and Leader of the Opposition

in Parliament Sheikh Hasina

will address two public meet-

ings April 30 and May 1 on the

occasion of historic May Day,

April 30 meeting at 3 pm at

the Bangabandhu Avenue in the

city to be organised by Jatiya

Sramik League, the labour

**Flyovers** 

From Page 1 Col. 5

is incurring a loss of Taka two

lakh per day due to the breach

of contract since February 28,

the date of the cancelling of

the work from September 15

after winning in a competitive

tender of different payment.

that means we have to com-

plete the two flyovers within

two and a half years but we

would be paid in five years.

There is a ulterior motive in

arbitrary cancellation order

would spoil the country's

reputation abroad because a

Singaporean company L&M

Presstressing (pte) Ltd was

working in the project as one

government will have to pay

more than 60 per cent of the

total valuation of the project

without any work," he said

adding, "the two flyovers would

cost more than Tk. 150 crore

trying to resume the project

according to the terms of the

contract before taking legal

ter, the Secretary (Roads) and

the Joint Secretary (Comms.

Dev.) were not available for

comments. But a former

Planning Commission member

who wished not to be

identified said that the flyovers

were needless 'in a poor

flyovers was a personal liking

of Ershad. He wanted to show

foreign donors the so-called

development. So he chose the

sites near the Zia International

The present government is

now in a dilemma whether to

withdraw the cancellation

order to avoid huge financial

liabilities or to keep the can-

cellation order valid.

"The construction of the

country as ours.

Airport".

The Communications Minis-

He also said "we are still

"It we take legal action the

Mamoon also said that this

He also said, "We started

wing of Awami League.

the order", he added

the cancellation.

of the investors.

just after one year".

action".

Hasina will address the

Awami League President

at the Dhaka Medical College.

new medical curriculum.

purview of the strike.

decision.

reports UNB.

The Medical and Denta

notices were rejected.

The Deputy Speaker admit-

the incident to the nation.

Earlier, Deputy Speaker

counterpart.

not be checked.

he said.

rejected.

#### Anticipatory bail Anis's petition referred to Chief Justice

The hearing of the anticipatory bail petition of former Foreign Minister Anisul Islam Mahmood was held on Sunday before a Division Bench of the High Court division, reports

The court consisted of Justice ARM Amirul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Badrul Islam Chowdhury

After hearing bothsides, the court ordered for placing the petition before the Chief Justice.

The prayer for anticipatory bail was opposed by Deputy Attorney General M. Shamsul Alam on the ground that the petitioner was wanted by the government under order of arrest but he was absconding to avoid arrest and as such he is not legally entitled to get anticipatory bail.

Rokonuddin Mahmood moved the anticipatory bail petition on behalf of Anisul Islam Mahmood.

## Cyclone

From Page 1 Col. 7

were advised to lower Warning Signal Number 2 and instead hoist Danger Signal Number 3. All fishering boats and trawlers of north Bay were advised to remain in shelter until further notice.

A cyclone preparedness source said farmers in most of the coastal upazilas are now awaiting harvest of their IRRI-Boro crops. The cyclone, if it hits Bangladesh may cause a

## Mosharraf, Zeenat chargesheeted

The Bureau of Anti-Corruption on Sunday submitted with the court a charge sheet against former Industries Secretary A.K.M. Mosharraf Hossain and his wife Begum Zeenat Mosharraf for misuse of government property and transports for their personal use, reports BSS. A case in this connection

was earlier filed with the Mottiheel police station by the Bureau of Anti-Corruption on January 1,1991.

A handout said the charge sheet had been submitted as the allegations made against them were established.

## Teachers' politics responsible for CU unrest

By Staff Correspondent

The Chittagong University enquiry commission in its report submitted recently held teachers' politics and related activities responsible for student unrest in the campus, according to a reliable source. The commission has rec-

ommended removal of the present Vice-Chancellor, the source said.

Chittagong University has remained closed since December 22, 1990 following a clash between students of the All-Party Students Unity (APSU) and Islami Chhatra Shibir in which one student of Chhatra Maitree and a guardian were killed and 50 teachers and students injured.

The university was scheduled to reopen on March 23 but the authorities extended the closure on that day upto May 4 asking the administration to review the situation.

### CU APSU opposes removal of VC

CHITTAGONG, Apr 28 The Leaders of the All-Party Students Unity (APSU) of the Chittagong University today urged the government not to remove the Vice Chancellor of the University in the face of pressure from any quarter, re-

ports BSS. The APSU brought out a procession in the city in protest against the reported move to remove the Vice Chancellor, which they said. would be violation of the University Ordinance, 1973. A meeting was also held after the procession with APSU leader Mukaddes Ali Mojumdar in the

chair. CUCSU VP Nazim Uddin, General Secretary of CUCSU Azim Uddin, leaders of APSU Monzurul Alam Shahin, Nazmul Karim Dulal and Mahbubur

Rahman addressed it. The APSU leaders handed over a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner and

Police Commissioner of Chittagong.

The Chittagong University has been closed for over four months since December 22 incident and it is now scheduled to reopen on May 5.

#### Editor : S. M. Ali

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# MPs urged to abide by **Joint Declaration**

Speakers at a discussion meeting on Sunday called the parliament member for abiding by the November 19 joint declaration of the three alliances for transfer of power to a sovereign parliament, reports discussion on

"Establishment of a parliamentary form of government accountable to the people as outlined by the three alliances" emphasised that the new parliament should reflect hopes and aspiration of the people.

Five-Party Alliance organised the meeting at Col. Taher Auditorium where Syed Istiaq Ahmed, Fatz Ahmed, Advocate Shamsul Huq Chowdhury, Dr. Anwarullah Chowdhury Amanullah Kabir and Rashed Khan Menon, MP took part in the deliberations. Convenor of the alliance AFM Mahabubul Hug presided.

"Our political culture speaks" of the parliamentary form of government", Istiaq said adding that there would be yet another movement if the existing presidential system is kept

Istiag, however, said the confusion over the issue should be resolved by those who framed the "modality" during the anti-autocratic movement.

Shamsul Huq Chowdhury pleaded for checks and balance in the Constitution because "absolute power corrupts

#### 2 ward Commissioners arrested

Two Ward Commissioners of the Dhaka City Corporation were arrested for suspicious movement on Sunday. Police said they arrested the two Ward Commissioners - Amjad Hossain, Commissioner of Ward 17 (Dhanmondi-Hazaribag) and Abul Bashar alias Abu of Ward 36 (Kotwali) - for suspicious movement early hours on Sunday under section 54 of Cr.PC.

#### Clash over tender in Rajshahi

RAJSHAHI, Apr 28: Clashes among contractors over tenders of the City Corporation since Saturday night have . spread panic in the town. Witnesses said about 50 contractor and their goons chased one another at Sonadighi crossing at about 8-30 last night, reports UNB.

Faiz Ahmed said although the country witnessed both the forms of government in last 19 years the joint declaration agreed upon by the three alliances prior to the fall of the Ershad regime should be the basis of resolving the issue at

Whether a government good or not does not depend only on the form of government but also on the way it runs the statecraft". Dr Anwarullah Chowdhury said.

Amanullah Kabir said the present demand was for an accountable or answerable government and it could be possible both in presidential and parliamentary form of government

Rashed Khan Menon, MP pointed out that BNP leaders also agreed on the parliamentary form of government when discussions took place during the anti-Ershad movement.

He said the parliamentary form of government was the demand of the nation, not of any party or alliance, and hoped that BNP would bring a bill for introducing parliamentary democracy to resolve the issue once for all.

## Changes in missions abroad likely

Some important changes are expected to take place in the country's diplomatic missions abroad, according to informed sources in Dhaka on Sunday, reports UNB.

Anwar Hashim, now Bangladesh Ambassador to Rumania, has been transferred to Islamabad while High Commissioner to Pakistan Shafi Sami will proceed to Beijing to replace Ambassador Faruq Sobhan.

Sobhan, who was earlier promoted to the rank of Additional Foreign Secretary. will come back to the headquarter.

In another development, country's High Commissioner to India Faruque Ahmed Chowdhury who is reported to have been given one year extension, will continue his assignment.

Ambassador Major General Munnaf is also reported to have been transferred from Manila to Jakarta.

Chief Whip of the Treasury

Bench Delwar Hossain said

that MPs cannot be put in de-

tention as the Act of 1963 is

still valid. But, if there is any

specific allegation against any-

body, he will be brought under

the jurisdiction of law", he

said adding "We can't ask the

law enforcing agencies to do

anything contrary to the exist-

Awami League who had some

understanding with the JP and

this, he said. Become clear

after the meeting of Moudud

Ahmed with the Leader of the

said that the Speaker was the

custodian of the Parliament

and was supposed the protect

the privileges of the Members.

istering of the oath to Anwar

Hossain and said that this act

of the Speaker would remain

in Golden letters in the history

Ganatantri Party said that all

the elected Members of the

Parliament should get the pro-

Suranjit Sengupta of

of the Parliament.

He appreciated the admin-

Salauddin Kader Chowdhury

Opposition Sheikh Hasina.

He alleged that it was the

# Storm over Anwar

From Page 1 Col. 4

was clearly mentioned in the order that the detention would be effective from December 11, the date the order was issued. So, according to Moudud, the order had expired on April 11. The JP leader said that it

was the Awami League who enacted the Special Powers Act and alleged that the AL was not defending privileges of an elected MP

Mohammad Nasim, the Chief Whip of the Opposition said that Zainal Hazari of AL, elected to the Third Parliament, had been detained by the Jatiya Party government.

The questions of his privileges were raised in the House, but were ignored by the ruling party.

Asaduzzaman of the AL said that Anwar Hossain was a proclaimed absconder and was asked to surrender within a specified time, but did not do

The AL MP demanded a statement on this issue from the Prime Minister who is in charge of the Home Ministry. "It is now clear who is in an entente with the Jatiya Party\*,

## Gujarat riots

From Page 1 Col. 5 have been declared "highly sensitive".

Disillusioned with the failure of the authorities in curbing the growing activities of the Lalkhandis, the local people have formed a private army called "Sunlight Sena" to

counter the militants. According to official sources, a series of violent clashes have been reported between the Lalkhandis and Sunlight Sena activities during he past four months.

Intelligence sources do not rule out the possibility of large scale violence during the Lok Sabha polls as the JMM leader. Binod Behari Mahato, who is spearheading the Lakhandi movement, has jumped into the electoral field to contest the Giridih Lok Sabha seat.

The sources said that with increasing incidents of guerilla activities, killing for ransom and intensive training by the MCC and PWG, further violence was apprehended in the region.

tection of law. Tofael Ahmed, Sheikh Selim and Zainal Hazari of the Awami League also took part in

> the debate. JP workers From Page 1 Col. 5

parked there or passing through the area. A number of cars was damaged.

Police also lathi-charged the JP workers injuring some of them. The scattered processionists later held another rally in front of the National Press Club condemning the police

action. The rally at Dainik Bangla crossing was held in observance of the party's countrywide 'demonstration day' demanding release of the deposed president, JP acting chairman Mizanur Rahman

Choudhury and other leaders, Addressing the rally, speakers cautioned the government that massive movement would be launched if the demands were not fulfilled without further delay. They also called upon the government to immediately withdraw the warrant of arrest against former ministers Anwar Hossain Manju, Sardar Amjad Hossain and Naziur Rahman Manju.

Besides, processions were brought out and rallies held in various parts of the metropolis.

Our staff correspondent from Chittagong adds: The Chittagong unit of JP brought out a procession in the port city in observance of the day. The processionists paraded the city thoroughfares.

#### Talpatty kidnapping **Printing Presses** BDR holds flag

From Page 1 Col. 8 to provide for appeal against refusal to authenticate declarations or cancellation of such declaration by the district magistrate with an appellate board.

The Printing Presses and Publications (Declaration and Registration) Act 1973 had provided for making such appeals with the government.

The Opposition criticised the bill saying the government has failed to repeal the 1973 law which it had branded as a black law. They called for presenting a comprehensive bill to ensure press freedom.

Opposition Bench members said the appellate board provided for in the new law would be constituted with persons nominated by the government.

The government would thus still be in a position to influence decisions relating to authentication of declarations of and granting registrations to newspapers, they said. There were heated ex-

changes between JSD member

Shahjahan Straj and some AL leaders as the former accused the latter of framing the black in reply State Minister for Information Nurul Huda said basis of recommendations

the bill was prepared on the made by an expert committee constituted by the government in December. He said the bill sought to remove some provisions which make the Printing Presses and Publications Act a black law

The bill was then passed by a voice vote.

Opposition Bench members who took part in the discussion on the bill were Rahmat Ali. Prof. Rafiqul Islam. M. Zubed Ali, Advocate Mustafizur Rahman, Principal Nazrul Islam, Md. Asaduzzaman, Salahuddin Yusuf, Mosharraf Hossain, Sudhangsu Shekhar Haldar and Mizanur Rahman Manu of Awami League, independent member Nurul Islam Mont, Workers Party member Rashed Khan Menon, JSD member Shahjahan Siraj, Jatiya Party member Moqsud Ibne Aziz Lama and Jamaat member Sheikh Ansar Ali.

## Menu

From Page 1 Col. 8 The jail authorities sent the contradiction to the Home

Ministry, a source said. The source said, "his breakfast includes four or five "rutis", one or two eggs, fried potatoes and 'halua', and added that 'obviously we have brought some varieties in the menu.

"We some times want to know his personal choices for food. He eats a little and usually takes two or three 'rutis' and an egg with fried potatoes and halua", the jail official added. "We also provide him bananas and apples", he added. "A division prisoner is allotted 500 grams of rice /bread, and substantial quantity of fish, meat, dal, vegetables and sometimes milk a day", the official said adding that "the budget for the good is not fixed, we follow the menu. whatever be the cost".

"We serve breakfast by 8.30 am, lunch by 1.30 pm and dinner by 8 pm", the official added. He is also served tea in the morning and in the after-

Another source said, similar food was being provided to Begum Roushan Ershad and their son Shaad and adopted daughter Zebin in Gulshan sub-jail.

A Toyota Starlet car (No. 3736) of the government's transport pool is used to carry food from Dhaka Central Jail to Gulshan sub-jail (house no. 10, road no. 84).

Sakhawat Ali is the driver of the car and warden Nazrul carries the five-box tiffin carrier, the source said.

A doctor of the jail remains present when the food is examined by the officials of the special branch.

Another source, who is directly involved in the whole process said. "This is a boring job. We need to be very meticulous about the whole process"

## Willes School to retain land

Minister for State Principal Education Mohammed Yunus Khan on Sunday declared that the government would take necessary steps for the retention of the land and property under the possession of Willes Little Flower School, reports UNB.

During an unscheduled visit to the school premises at Kakrail Sunday afternoon, the State Minister exchanged views with the members of the teaching staff and the managing committee.

The committee, teachers, guardians and students have long been demanding retention of the land and property housing the school. The minister assured that

Jhenidah, Magura and Barisal. the problems confronting the school and its teachers and students will be resolved soon. Later, he went round different class rooms and the laboratory facilities at the school.

Meanwhile two more bills were introduced in the House by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. The first bill the Arms (Amendment) Bill seeks to strengthen the Arms Act of 1978 to check the use of illegal arms. The second bill

the Special Powers (Amendment) Bill seeks to repeal half a dozen Sections of the Special Powers Act of 1974.

Salahuddin Yusuf of AL spoke opposing the introduction of the first bill, while Abdur Razzak of Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BKSAL) opposed the introduction of the second bill.

Salahuddin Yusuf said that the Arms (Amendment) Bill which sought even to restrict movement with licenced arms ran the risk of being misused.

Abdur Razzak said the Special Powers Act was passed at a time when subversive elements were active to undo the victory of the War of Liberation. The context has changed and the law should be repealed, he

In reply Begum Khaleda Zia said that the Arms (Amendment) Bill which seeks to enforce an ordinance promulgated by the interim government proved effective to restrict the show of arms. The people suffered a lot due to open use of arms during nine years of autocratic rule, she

About the Special Powers Act she said her government was promise-bound to repeal it, but time was needed for

# The Midnight File

## 5 killed in Kashmir gunfire

JAMMU(India) . Apr 28: Five people died during an exchange of gunfire between Muslim militants and soldiers in Kashmir, officials said today. Meanwhile, authorities ordered extraordinary security steps as the state government in Jammu and Kashmir shifted its headquarters to the summer capital of Srinagar in the Kashmir valley Saturday, reports

## 6 Palestinians shot, wounded

TELAVIV. Apr 28: Israelt troops shot and wounded six Palestinians, one seriously, during clashes in the occupied Gaza Strip and West Bank today. Palestinian sources said a man was wounded by troops firing at Demonstrators in Nablus where Arabs stoned Israeli soldiers and cars bearing non-West Bank number plates, reports Reuter.

## No world confce on ME: Levy

TELAVIV. Apr 28: Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy. clearing up what he described as a misconception by some, said today that Israel rejected an international peace conference. "Anyone who thinks my talks with Mr. Barker will lead to an international conference is a political novice," Mr. Levy said after a weekly Cabinet meeting, reports AFP.

#### Discovery launched

CAPE CANAVERAL (Florida). Apr 28: The US space shuttle discovery was launched from Florida today on the 40th shuttle mission in 10 years, a daring research flight for the 'Star Wars' missile defence programme. The shuttle thundered from its launch pad at 7:34 am EDT (1134 GMT), half an hour later than planned because of a brief technical problem with one of its flight recorders, reports Reuter.

## Druse militias lay down arms

EIN ZHALTA (Lebanon). Apr 28: One of Lebanon's most important civil war militias began handing over its weapons to the Syrian Army on Sunday, boosting efforts to carry out an

## Arab-brokered peace plan. reports AP.

Seen from the Gallery

From Page 1 Col. 8 It is said that more than 60 per cent of the Members of Parliament are newcomers They are however, not the guilty ones. It is the old timers, ones who are supposed to set examples of parliamentary etiquette and behaviour for the first-timers, who misuse the provision of "point of order", or that of "personal explanation" to make political declarations or provocative and accusatory statements about their opponents that derail the proceedings of parliament.

URING yesterday's session the Members most guilty of the above offences were Shahjahan Siraj of the JSD and Md. Mosharraf Hossain of the AL, especially the latter who seemed to lose total control of his emotions, and unleashed, a virulent attack on Shahjahan Siraj in response to Shahjahan Straj's equally uncalled for references to events and happenings that had very little to do with the Printing Presses and Publications (Declaration and Registration) (Amendment) Bill 1991 that was being dis-

But the person who is really responsible for starting this unsavory episode is Salauddin Yusuf of the AL who accused the JSD members of vandalism, political killings etc in the name of "Gano Bahini" during the days of Awami League

#### Tubewells

From Page 1 Col. 7 It was told that till March 20, 1,074 tubewells were installed in the southern districts of the country. At present there are 18,504 tubewells in Barisal district, 4,316 in Jhalakathi, 8,330 in Pirojpur, 5,248 in Bhola, 4,407 in Patuakhali and 2,815 in Borguna districts.

In her introductory statement in the meeting Begum Zia underlined the need for coordinating the efforts of the government and non-government organisations (NGOs) in combating diarrhoea in the southern districts.

Begum Zia called for intensifying the activities of all sectors to give succour to the diarrhoea affected people. Begum Zia pointed out that

a central control room had

been set up in the capital under the Health Ministry to monitor the diarrhoeal situa-She said adequate number of physicians were working and sufficient medicines were made available in the affected areas. She expressed her satis-

faction at the medicare ser-

vices, being provided by the

Army medical corps and dif-

ferent medical teams of the government and voluntary organisations. Begum Zia stressed the need for extensive education of the rural masses on primary healthcare and other health aspects to check the spreading

of diarrhoea. The Prime Minister noted with satisfaction that the diarrhoeal situation was completely under control in different districts including Pirojpur, Sathkhira, Khulna, Nilphamari, Chandpur, Gopalganj, Gazipur, Faridpur, Pabna

She was told that an additional fund of Taka 31 lakh was sanctioned for medicines and transport facilities for health workers in the affected areas.

Shahjahan Strai reported by saying that 10,000 of their workers were killed by the Rakkhi Bhahini (the notorious para-military force set up during AL rule). At this point the Chief Whip

demanded the expunging of all the remarks of Shahjahan Straj. The Speaker ruled that not only Siraj's remarks but irrelevant remarks of all the

other speakers on this bill

of the Opposition, Md. Nasim

would be expunged as well. Everybody heaved a sigh of relief and thought that the House could now go ahead with its business when Md. Mosharraf Hossain went on his verbal rampage that bordered on contempt of the House. Md. Nasim had to go over and re-

strain him physically. It was obvious that many of these older politicians have brought their "Paltan maidan" habits to parliament, forgetting that their raised voices could not substitute logic and that just an incessant altering of words, did not necessarily make for oratory.

THE highlights of yesterday's proceedings were an un scheduled debate on the oathtaking of the fugitive former minister of the Ershad government Anwar Hossain, the introduction of the Arms Act. 1878 (Amendment) Bill, 1991. the Special Powers Act 1974 (Amendment) Bill 1991 and the adoption of the Printing Presses and Publications (Declaration and Registration) Act, 1973 (Amendment) Bill,

1991.

THE debate on Anwar Hossain's oath-taking as the elected member of Parliament originated from an attempt by the Awami League to embarrass the government and especially the Prime Minister, who holds the Home (ministry) portfolio, by attempting to show that the fugitive minister could not have gone past the police cordon of the Parliament House without being arrested but for the connivance of the ruling party. However, due to their inept handling of the issue the debate turned into speeches of accusations and counter-accusations in which the AL ended up doing more of the explaining — of such incidents as the Moudud-Hasina meeting of a few days before, of Sheikh Selim greeting Anwar Hossain in the corridors of the House, etc

FORMER Vice-President and Acting Chairman of the Jatiya Party (JPPP) took full advantage of the debate and by rising to speak on this pretext or the other tried, successfully, to project himself as a serious member of the new Parliament and very skillfully played on the BNP-AL rivalry to show with which of the two parties the JP actually has any alliance, if at all.

than the ruling party.

By thanking Hasina for inviting him to tea, and saying that he would welcome a repeat invitation, he successfully played on the BNP's wish to show to the public that the JP and the AL had some sort of understanding.

In so doing he got the approval applause of the Treasury Bench.

But soon enough he played the other card and was full of praise for the BNP for upholding the rights and privileges of a Member of Parliament, almost implying that the JP knew that the BNP would give

protect to Anwar Hossain if he surrendered.

Neither the AL nor the BNP could make the "stigma" stick either way. The most important benefit of the devote I suppose unin-

tended - was that the rights of an elected Member of Parliament were repeatedly highlighted and supported by all parties. This will greatly strengthen

the positions of parliament members against being harassed in future for political

THE introduction of the Special Powers Act, 1974 (Amendment) Bill 1991 took many people by surprise. After Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's election pledge of doing away with this hated Act, and her recent statement to Parliament to the effect that the annulment of this Act was under active consideration of her government, the Amendment Bill and her introductory speech on it, saying that the Act would be done away with at the PROPER

TIME, sounded a bit out of Whenever she decides to throw this Act by the wayside is surely not likely to be very

discussion on the Amendment Bill will be held at a later date when it will come up for consideration.

HE debate on the Printing Presses and Publications (Declaration and Registration) (Amendment) Act 1991 was

insipid at best. An Act dealing with enhancing the freedom of the press, which in a democratic set up is expected to play a pivotal role in protecting and promoting the civic and political rights of the people, literally

went by default. This Act originating in the early sixties, was the brain child of Pakistan's Goebbels, Altaf Gauhar, the infamous Information Secretary of the

early Ayub days. Its amended version of 1973 left the journalist community aghast. Since then they have waged a relentless struggle against this "Black Law".

The new Act, attempts to democratise the Act - but only to an extent by inserting the provision of a Press Appellate Board which can reconsider a decision of the District Magistrate in case of his refusal to authenticate the application of a Declaration. How democratic, or pro-free press the Board will be, will depend to a great extent on the appointment of the Chairman of

the Press Council. THE debate in Parliament I did not focus on the fundamental issue of press freedom and non-interference of the government in the operation of the media.

Rhetorical statements of mass struggle and autocratic suppression of the press were made more to show the members' love for a free press than to point out the inadequacies of the Bill as presented.

Rashed Khan Menon tried to make a case for the annulment of the existing Act rather than go for a piece-meal amendment to it. But he really did not present forceful arguments in favour of it.

The State Minister for Information Md. Nurul Huda was suave and humourous in his presentation of the Bill which was passed by voice-vote after an uninspiring, repetitive and boring debate on this vital subject.