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The Daily Star

Let us devote our efforts to ensure free and fair polls on February 27. Cast your vote judiciously and allow others to exercise their rights.

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Inside today Magazine



In the regular weekly column MY WORLD, S.M. Ali pays tribute to Abdus Salam, a pioneer in independent journalism. Page 9

International

US stockpiling lethal weapons

US forces are stockpiling lethal ammunition for the battle of Kuwait, including fuel and explosives that ignite in mid-air. Page 5

Sport



Shovon Jamaly's double crowns in Nissan tennis. Page 7

Weekend sport

Lineker sinks Cameroon. Page 11

NEWS BRIEFS

Purge in N. Korea

TOKYO, Feb 7: North Korea has crushed an anti-revolutionary plot within the ruling workers party, a Japanese news agency reported today. Kyodo news service quoted radio Pyongyang as saying that "unorthodox ideological tendencies" sought to "confuse the blood lineage" in North Korea, reports AFP.

American shot dead in Turkey

ANKARA, Feb 7: An American citizen was shot dead by an unknown assailant in the southern Turkish city of Adana today, the semi-official Anatolian News Agency said. The gunman fired four shots at the American as he was getting into his car to go to work just after 7 am, the agency added.

Transport strike in Khulna

KHULNA, Feb 7: All road transport services to and from Khulna remained suspended for the whole day Thursday at the joint call of Khulna Motor Sramik Union and Khulna Minibus Owners Samity to protest the Gulf war and call for an immediate cease-fire, reports BSS.

Ctg port workers' strike continue

From Our Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, Feb 7: Some 1,500 workers of Chittagong port continue their strike on Saturday for the second day which hampered severely the normal works. The workers were demanding to introduce rotation system in their duty roster.

Blast in Karachi

KARACHI, Feb 7: A bomb exploded in a cinema in Pakistan's biggest city, Karachi, today police said they did not know if there had been casualties or who was responsible.

Hundreds of civilians killed in allied attacks so far: Iraq

Oilfields in Kuwait being set ablaze

BEIJING, Feb 7: Kuwaitis say the Iraqi soldiers are setting Kuwaiti oilfields on fire, US News Network CNN reported today, according to agencies.

Meanwhile Baghdad was hit by intense overnight air and missile attacks that pounded on into the morning Thursday, and US military sources said Iraq is using civilians to shield its anti-aircraft guns by moving the weapons into residential areas.

Also Thursday, the US

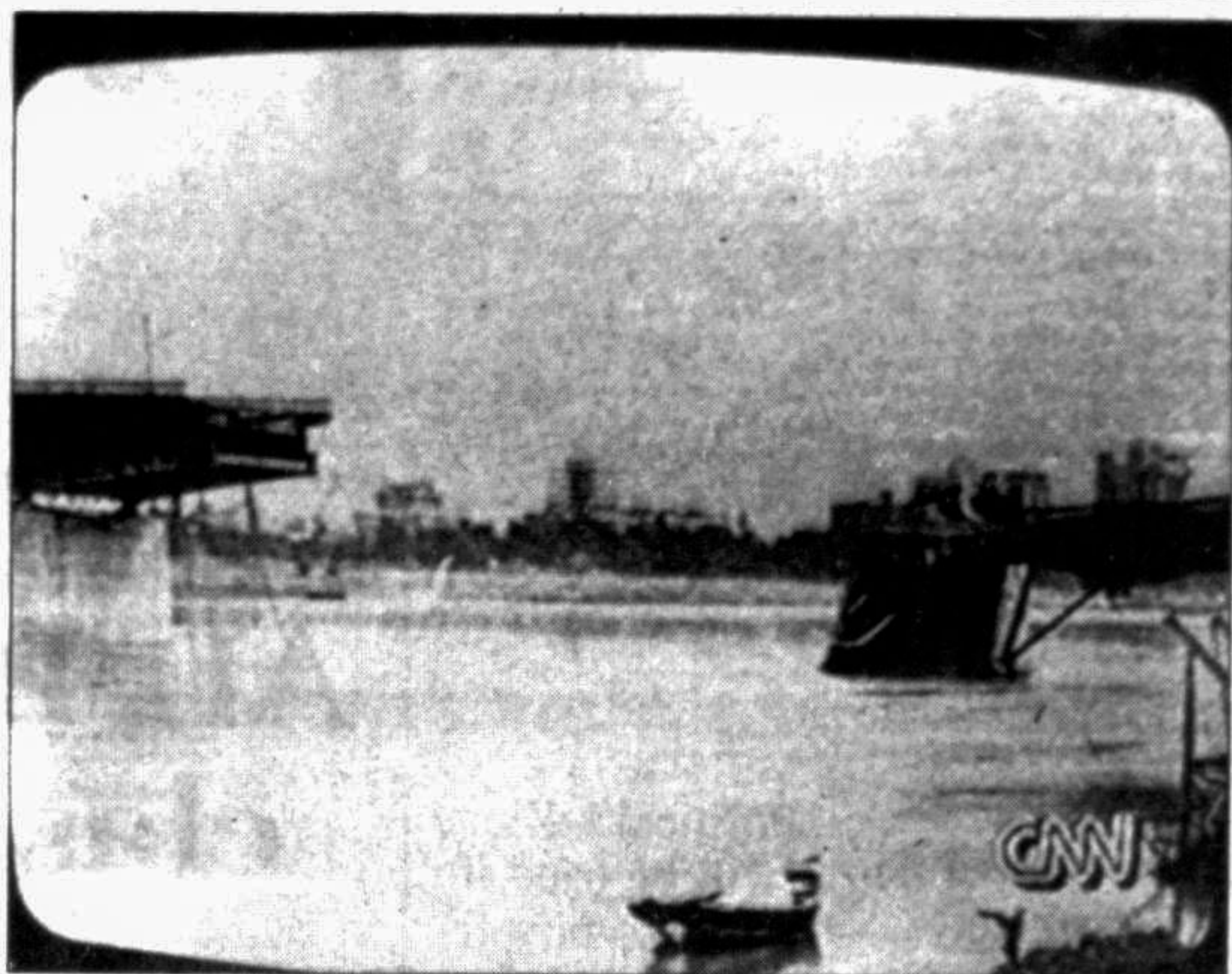
- ★ Wisconsin in action
- ★ 33 raids on Baghdad
- ★ 6 Iraqi aircraft destroyed
- ★ Iraq claims Scud attack on Israel
- ★ Republican Guards suffer heavy casualties
- ★ Iraq claims 40 Allied deaths
- ★ Iraqi troops surrender to journalists

command in Riyadh reported two Iraqi helicopters had been shot down by American planes.

Allied warplanes kept to their round-the-clock pace, roaring to unload their bombs on Saddam Hussein's forces, including dug-in ground troops and their supply lines.

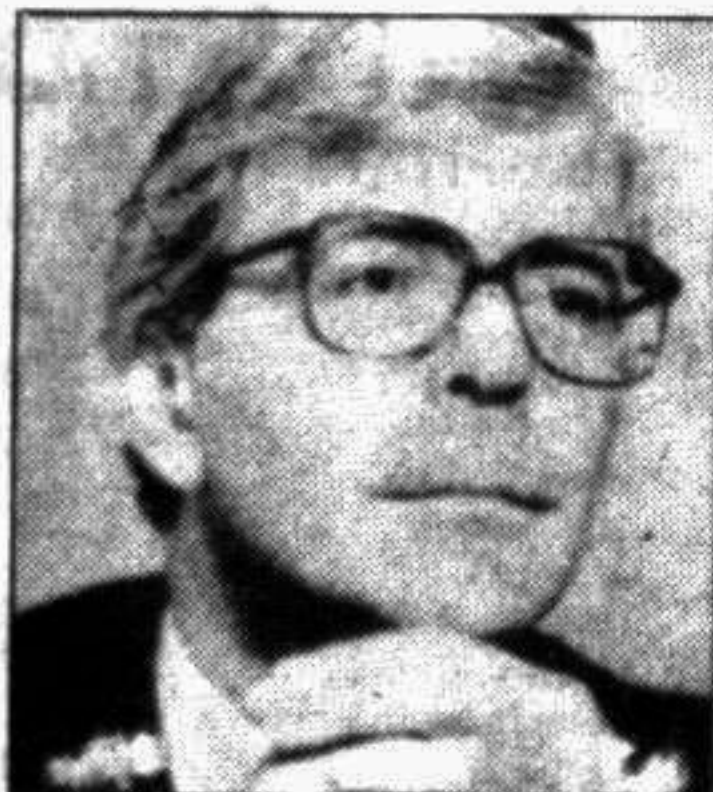
French jets hit Iraqi artillery sites in Kuwait and positions of the elite Republican Guards in Iraq, a French military communique said. Warplanes from Qatar's small air

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A bridge in Baghdad destroyed by Allied air and missile attack. This photograph taken in February 6 from Cable News Network (CNN) and monitored in Washington. — AFP photo

Mortar attack on Major's home



John Major

LONDON, Feb 7: Guerrillas fired three mortar bombs into the garden behind British Prime Minister John Major's official London home today, damaging buildings but causing no serious injuries, report Reuters.

Government sources said only one of the bombs exploded in the walled garden behind Number 10 Downing Street, the official prime ministerial office and residence, shattering glass in the windows of the cabinet room where Major was chairing a

meeting of his Gulf war cabinet.

At approximately 1015 GMT three rockets were fired from the back of a van the Sky television channel quoted witnesses as saying.

The report said the Prime Minister and his ministers stopped their meeting but carried on again shortly afterwards in another room in the building, a spokesman for Mr. Major said.

Windows were broken but the residence was not evacuated, the official spokesman said. See Page 12 Col. 7

Simmering discontent in Chittagong Hill Tracts

The political situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) has taken a new turn after the fall of authoritarian regime of President Ershad.

All is not well as was thought it would be when the Local Government act for Chittagong Hill Tracts was implemented.

This correspondent during his visit to the three districts of CHT recently observed that

the administration, tribals and non-tribals are equally unhappy over the indifference of political leaders to the prob-

Moinuddin Naser reports after visit to Chittagong Hill Tracts

lems of the hilly region. The political leadership that emerged after the introduction of local government council

seems to have been doing its best in tackling the problems and communicating with the tribal insurgents. But a section of students have shaken the leadership of Local Government Councils by raising new demands which included dissolution of the councils. Support lent to the students demand by All-Party Students Unity and leaders of some po-

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Lokaja Shilpi Gosthi, a cultural organisation, presenting folk songs at the Bangla Academy on Thursday. — Star photo

High Court takes up Ershad's petition

A habeas corpus petition challenging detention of former President H. M. Ershad and his wife Raushan was taken up on Thursday for consideration by a High Court Division Bench, reports UNB.

Hearing on the habeas corpus, moved by Ershad's lawyer Barrister Kazi Shahadat Hussain, will be held in next two weeks, court sources said.

The High Court Division Bench of the Supreme Court dealing with the case consists of Justice Abdul Hasib, Justice Fazle Hossain and Md. Habibur Rahman.

Ershad along with his wife Raushan was arrested under the Special Powers Act 1974 from Shena Bhavan, his official residence in Dhaka Cantonment, and confined to a house at Gulshan under 120 days' detention.

Ershad, in the face of a mass upsurge, stepped down handing over power to Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed on December 6.

Menon wants Khaleda - Hasina debate

Five-Party leader Rashed Khan Menon Thursday urged Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina and BNP leader Begum Khaleda Zia for a public debate on television on functioning of democracy and economic performance when their parties were in power, reports UNB.

Roots of autocratic rule could be traced in the bureaucratic way of running the country and wrong economic

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Gulf war pushes up prices of essentials

Star Report

Prices of essentials have abnormally shot up in the city markets since the start of the Gulf War.

In the last fortnight, the price of onion rose by Tk. 15 a kg to Taka 28. Garlic was selling at Taka 80 a kg, compared to Tk. 62 a month earlier. Lentil recorded a rise of ten from Taka 38 a kg. Dried pepper was up in price from Tk. 62 to Tk. 70 a kg.

The prices of different varieties of rice were also showing an upward trend, though unusual for this time of the year when Aman production makes supply positions steady.

Medium varieties of rice sold at Tk. 14.50 a kg. on Thursday. Retailers said the price of rice increased by Tk. 30 to Tk. 40 a maund in the last three weeks. At the wholesale rice market at Maulavi Bazar, the price soared by Tk.

25 a maund during the same period.

The prices of vegetables recorded a moderate rise while those of edible oils remained steady.

In the open markets, kerosene sold at Tk. 20 per litre, recording a rise by Tk. six a litre in the last fortnight. Sugar recorded a marginal rise in price, from Tk. 30 to Tk. 32 per kg.

Butter oil witnessed a steep rise in price -- from Tk. 145 for a two-pound can to Tk. 145 in the last week.

The price of powdered milk remained almost static while fish and meat prices recorded a slight rise.

Mutton is sold at Tk. 90 to 95 per kg, beef at Tk. 50 to 55 per kg and chicken Tk. 120 per kg.

Hilsa fish is sold at Tk. 35

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Govt functioning on dictates of a vested group: Faruk Rahman

CHITTAGONG, Feb 7: Colonel (Retd) Faruk Rahman, Chairman of Freedom Party, today alleged that the caretaker government was not impartial and it was functioning on the dictates of a vested group, reports BSS.

He was addressing a public meeting at Pahartali here this afternoon.

With an oblique reference to Awami League, Faruk Rahman said, he was not afraid of the fifth columnist.

Khaleda urges govt to play impartial role

MAJDI, Feb 7: Bangladesh Nationalist Party chief Begum Khaleda Zia today urged the caretaker government to play its impartial role as it was established for that purpose following the ouster of the autocratic regime, reports BSS.

She said that different quarters were now questioning the neutrality of the present government. Media also were not playing their impartial role, she added.

"Government and media are not playing their due role in fulfilling the demands of the people", Begum Zia told a

massive election meeting at Noakhali Zila School ground here.

With Noakhali district BNP chief Advocate Syed Delwar Hossain in the chair, the meeting was also addressed by BNP nominee from Noakhali-1 Mohammad Shahjahan.

In her day-long election campaign Begum Zia also addressed massive public meeting at Kabirhat, Bashurhat, Senbagh, Chaumuhani and Chakhal.

Referring to people's demand to send ousted President

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Gorbachev may have to quit

PARIS, Feb 7: President Mikhail Gorbachev would be forced to resign if the majority of voters oppose maintaining the Soviet Union as a federation in a poll next month, the radical mayor of Leningrad was quoted as saying on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

"If the result was negative, Gorbachev would be obliged to step down," said Anatoly Sobchak, interviewed by the French daily Le Monde at the world economic forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Citizens will be asked to vote on March 17 on whether they favour maintaining the Soviet Union as "a renewed

federation of sovereign republics with equal rights".

Lithuania, Estonia, Georgia and Armenia have said they have no intention of taking part in poll.

Sobchak, a leading opposition figure, predicted that a vote in favour of maintaining the federation would strengthen Gorbachev's position and encourage him to take a hardline position towards the republics, many of which are campaigning for independence.

"At the same time, it would harden opposition in the republics, making the current confrontation even more diffi-

cult," he added.

Sobchak said he would vote "no" because he did not want to see centralised power in the Soviet Union reinforced.

Gorbachev has come under fire for an order by the Defence and Interior ministries to start new police-military patrols nationwide, ostensibly to curb crime. Reformers say the patrols are another step on the road to dictatorship.

AP reports from Moscow: Mikhail S. Gorbachev made a surprise television appearance to tell Soviets of his determination to hold the country to

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Nationalised banks face fund shortage

By Shahiduzzaman Khan

All the four nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) are facing fund shortage to cover the statutory reserve requirements at 25 per cent of their total deposits.

The shortage is due to provisions made under the financial sector reforms for bad and doubtful credits and low level of recoveries of outstanding loans, according to banking sources.

Total shortfall of the NCBs

against the required level of reserves stood at Taka 97.11 crore on January 24.

The NCBs include Sonali Bank, Agrani Bank, Janata Bank and Rupali Bank. Their total deposits were Taka 13,141.47 crore — Taka 2716.45 crore in demand deposits and Taka 10,425.00 crore in time deposits — on January 24.

While the NCBs face liquidity problems, the private and

foreign banks are having surplus funds. They have not been able to expand their credits or invest their funds matching the growth in deposits with them.

Total surplus funds with private sector banks amounted to Taka 158.46 crore on January 24. Deposits with them totalled Taka 5693.38 crore — Taka 1352.83 crore demand deposits and Taka 4340.55

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US embassy officials meet Mizan

Two senior officials of the US Embassy met the Acting Chairman of Jatiya Party Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury at his Gulshan residence, reports UNB.

Party sources said Stephen K Snow, First Secretary of the Embassy and Chief of Political Desk, and John P. Torscher, a Seco Secretary, called on Mizan Chowdhury Thursday.

During the meeting, Chowdhury appreciated Ambassador William B Milam for his query about deposed President Ershad on Tuesday during his meeting with the Acting President.

They discussed matters relating to Jatiya Party's participation in the Feb 27 parliamentary elections.

Chowdhury explained his party's preparations for the elections, and the difficulties faced in the party's activities due to imprisonment of its top leaders and restrictions on coverage in Radio and TV.

He also expressed concern over neutral holding of the polls in the light of the present situation.

Present during the meeting were Acting Jatiya Party Secretary General A B M Shahjahan, Publicity Secretary Mia Musa Hossain and Political Secretary Sayeed Tareq, and Ismail Hossain Bengali.

APSU denounces 'US interference'

The All-Party Students Unity (APSU) Thursday denounced US Ambassador Mr. William B. Milam's questions "in favour of former autocratic President H. M. Ershad" in course of his meeting with Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed on February 5 as an interference in the internal matters, reports BSS.

In a press statement, the APSU said such references made by the US Ambassador were contrary to the people's verdict through the mass upsurge.

The statement further pointed out that this type of behaviour by the US Ambassador was a manifestation of unwanted interference and overlordship of the United States on the Third World countries.

The APSU expressed its surprise that when autocratic Ershad had gunned down hundreds of people indiscriminately and put behind the bar thousands of political workers without trial they had remained silent and refrained from raising the issue of human rights.

Students pledge to help police recover arms

Senior police officials and student leaders met the Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed in an unprecedented meeting Thursday pledging mutual cooperation to free the country including the academic arena of illegal arms, reports BSS.

The meeting held at the International Conference Centre in the President's secretariat in Dhaka was presided over by the Acting President.

Among others, the meeting was attended by Home Secretary M. S. Sayed, Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor Prof. Moniruzzaman Mian, President of Dhaka University Teachers Association Prof. Anwarullah Chowdhury, Inspector General of Police A. M. Chowdhury.

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Naziur's village property attached

BHOLA, Feb 7: All the immovable and movable village property worth more than Tk 60 lakh of former Minister Naziur Rahman Manzur was attached by the government today, officials said, reports UNB.

A police contingent led by sub-inspector Rezaur Rahman in presence of a first class magistrate attached the houses, furniture and other articles at the absconding minister's homestead.

All the doors of the houses were locked and sealed and kept under the custody of police posted there.

The attachment was because of Naziur's failure to surrender to jail authorities by January 31, a deadline set by the caretaker government.