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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 International

Who's who in Iraqi command



So controlled is the Iraqi system that even biographical details are rarely published. A list of key power people in Iraqi command on Page 5

Massive Allied blitz

US army gunners have fired hundreds of artillery shells and rockets into an area south of Baghdad in one of the heaviest barrages of war so far. Page 6

Article

Oxygen to Perestroika shut off



Gorbachev looks more beleaguered than ever. His swing to the right has lost him the support of radicals and liberals, but he has gone not far enough for many conservatives. Page 4

Metropolitan

An expose of celebrated painter Qumrul Hassan's works now on display in the city. Page 3

NEWS BRIEFS

Deadline for Iraqi withdrawal

PARIS, Feb 20: The Allies have given Iraq until Thursday night to withdraw unconditionally from Kuwait. Jean Lecanuet, Chairman of France's Senate Commission on Foreign Affairs and Defence said here today, reports AFP.

OIC meet today

CAIRO, Feb 20: The Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) is expected to call for Iraq's unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait when nine members meet in Cairo on Thursday but delegates said they could face a dissenting line from the PLO, reports Reuters.

Allies reject 'peaceful attempts'

LONDON, Feb 20: The Allies have rejected all of Iraq's "peaceful attempts" to find a solution to the Gulf crisis, Iraqi Radio said today in a broadcast monitored by the BBC, reports AFP.

Israeli attack on Palestinians

RASHAYA (Lebanon), Feb 20: Three people were hurt today when two Israeli fighter-bombers launched a missile attack on a Palestinian position in central Lebanon, regional security sources reported, says AFP.

Black rain in Bushehr

NICOSIA, Feb 20: Black, greasy rain caused by smoke from burning oil wells in Kuwait poured on the Iranian Gulf port of Bushehr today, the Iranian news agency IRNA reported. It was the fourth black rainfall on the city, almost due east of Kuwait, reports Reuters.

China for immediate withdrawal: Soviets stay optimistic

Allies ready for G-day

As the world awaited on Iraqi response to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's last-ditch peace proposal US-led forces in the Gulf were in full readiness to launch the ground war to free Kuwait, report agencies.

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein should announce his intentions on Kuwait within the next few hours, French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas said in Paris on Wednesday.

Spokesman Louis Le Penec expressed the government's "conviction" that "the next few hours will be decisive".

Soviet officials expressed optimism on Tuesday that Iraq would agree to pull out of Kuwait, probably under the terms of a peace plan proposed by President Mikhail Gorbachev.

A series of spokesmen in Moscow expressed varying degrees of optimism in comments to foreign news organisations that Baghdad would accept the Gorbachev package, if only to save itself from a mas-

sive U.S.-led ground assault. Karen Karagezian, a Gorbachev spokesman, told Reuters the Kremlin expected a reply from Baghdad "in the

★ Baghdad bombed

★ Soviets optimistic

★ Iraqi troops will be defeated in short order: US general

★ Iran appeals for delay in ground action

★ Iraqi army on verge of collapse: Schwarzkopf

★ Iraqi border post destroyed

★ Pravda discloses Gorbachev's peace plan

★ EC welcomes Soviet plan

coming days — in one day or two". But he said the Soviet President had set no time limit for a response.

Reuters from Dharan says:

Allied forces poised in forward positions to strike at Iraqi troops on Wednesday were awaiting the order for G-day—the start of the Gulf war ground offensive.

American Lieutenant-General Calvin Waleer told commanders at a huge supply base within earshot of the aerial bombardment of Iraqi positions: "It doesn't appear that it's going to be long." He also said that Iraqi troops would be quickly defeated if such an attack is launched.

The outspoken general, who surprised President George Bush at the outbreak of the war by saying the Army would not be ready until mid-February, on Tuesday dismissed suggestions that Soviet peace initiatives would affect his preparations for war.

"Iraq will be defeated in short order if we start a ground campaign," he predicted.

One thousand battle-ready British troops of the "Desert Rats" — the 7th Armoured See Page 12 Col. 3

Fairfax report shortly

Star Report

The US-based detective organisation Fairfax, working under contract of the Bangladesh government, had unearthed some important clues on the alleged amassing of wealth abroad by former president Ershad and his wife Raushan.

Foreign Affairs Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed told the Daily Star that Fairfax, which had been hired over a month ago to investigate the alleged transfer of wealth, would submit its report very soon.

A Fairfax team that came to Bangladesh early this month stayed in Dhaka for ten days and interrogated the persons involved including the associates of Ershad to get clues about the transfer of

wealth. The team also talked to some officials of a foreign bank, it is learnt.

According to an informed source the team during its stay also met Ershad at the Gulshan prison. However official sources declined comment on the matter.

The Bangladesh government, through its Embassy in Washington, struck a deal with the US-based detective organisation to carry out an investigation.

The demand for a probe had been made by the political parties.

Fairfax has so far collected some evidence of corruption by Ershad, says a source.

The payment Fairfax is to receive, for carrying out the

investigation has not as yet been fixed but Foreign Ministry sources say that this matter would be settled mutually after receipt of the detective organisation's report.

Fairfax, it may be recalled, was sometime in the past hired by Marium Mamtaz (Mary) who claimed to be the second wife of ousted President Ershad and it was during that investigation that a Fairfax team found evidence of the accumulation of wealth abroad by Ershad.

The organisation also named a multinational bank that had carried out the transactions and the results of its findings were also published in many foreign newspapers.

They are out to foil our victory: Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia on Wednesday warned that her party would launch a fresh movement if the armed miscreants, attacking BNP activists throughout the country, were not dealt with immediately.

She alleged that the miscreants, backed by a rival political party and patronised by the ousted regime of Ershad were again out to foil BNP's possible victory in the parliamentary polls. "We are showing tolerance in the interest of peaceful holding of the polls. But further attack on my party leaders and workers will not be tolerated", she cautioned.

Addressing a big election meeting at Dhanmondi the BNP chief asked her party workers to have patience under the circumstances and announced amid cheers that BNP would reply to all those terri-

st acts through ballots on February 27.

Throwing a challenge to the Awami League leadership, Begum Zia said, if you seek people's mandate in the ensuing elections, let them exercise their rights freely.

She criticised the post-independence regime saying that it killed democracy by introducing one-party rule, snatched people's democratic rights, created famine, subjected people to black laws failing to fulfil their hopes and aspirations in independent Bangladesh.

BNP government introduced multi-party democracy, politics of development and led the nation towards progress by launching the 19-point programme, she reminded people.

She said her party forced the illegal and autocratic government of Ershad to step down through nine years' un-

Oil import bill rises to \$ 80m

By Moazzem Hossain

Oil import bill in the first half of fiscal 1990-91 increased by 80 million US dollars. The rise was unexpectedly lower than the projection made immediately after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

An official task force estimated in October that the annual oil import bill in 1990-91 would increase by 244 million dollars. The projection was made on the assumption of oil price at 36 dollars a barrel in the international markets. The domestic retail prices of petroleum products were raised

by an average of 85 per cent from mid-April to October 1.

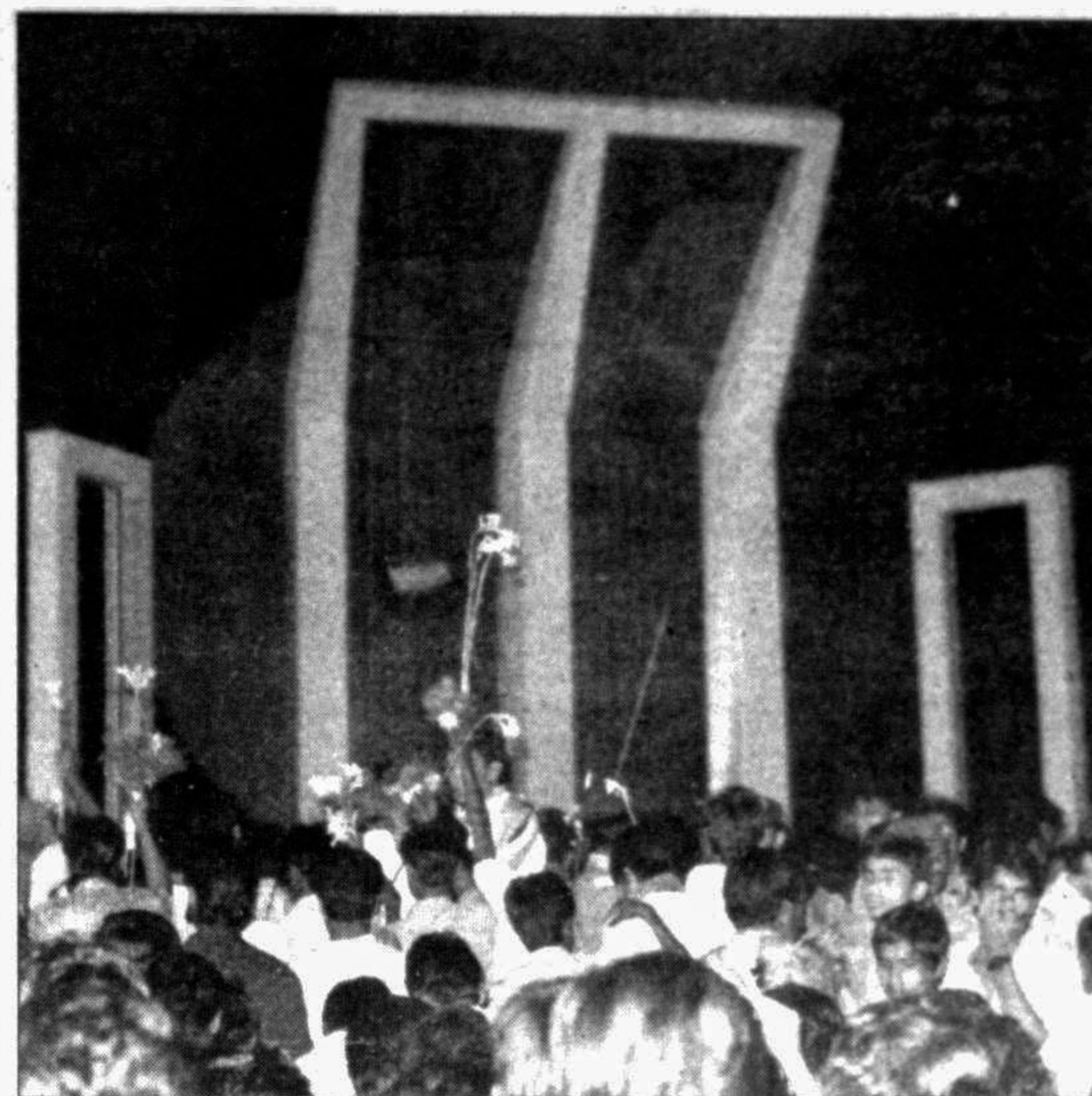
The prices in the international oil markets shot up to 40 dollars a barrel at one stage as the immediate fallout of the Gulf crisis. But, the market was calm later. The prices have come down further after the outbreak of the Gulf war, quite contrary to what was projected.

The December purchases of crude oil by Bangladesh from Saudi Arabia were priced 27 US dollars a barrel. The rates for imports in January were

even lower.

For six months up to December, 1990 country's imports of Petroleum, Oil and Lubricants (POL) were valued 220.85 million dollars. The comparative figure for the same period in 1989 was 140.80 million dollars.

While the oil prices are still unpredictable and will largely depend on the developments about the Gulf war, the 13-member Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is already worried over the tumbling prices in the in-



The Central Shaheed Minar just after midnight yesterday.

— Star photo

Amar Ekushey today

By Staff Correspondent

The programme of 'Shaheed Day' (Ekushey February) went off to an auspicious start immediately after midnight Wednesday with placing of wreaths by Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed at the Central Shaheed Minar.

The Acting President, accompanied by the members of his council of Advisers and the chiefs of three services, arrived at the Shaheed Minar from the robin-crossing side. It was the first visit to the Shaheed Minar by the head of

state to mark the occasion in eight years. The Central Shaheed Minar was overcrowded. The Ekushey Uddjan Committee found it difficult to manage the rush of people.

The Acting President was

received at the Shaheed Minar premises by Prof.

Moniruzzaman Miah, Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University and Prof. Anwarullah, chief co-ordinator of the Ekushey Uddjan Committee.

As the Acting President approached the foot of the Shaheed Minar people from all sides broke cordons to enter the area and have a glimpse of him.

After the placing of wreaths by the Acting President, the See Page 12 Col. 2

Ekushey symbol of protest: Shahabuddin

Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed on Wednesday said the "Ekushey February", always a symbol of great protest against injustice, autocracy and exploitation, would once again inspire the nation to march towards its cherished goal of democracy through the holding of free and fair parliamentary elections now only six days away, reports BSS.

In a message on the eve of "Ekushey February", the Acting President said the day commemorating the historic Language Movement is pledged-bound to establish a happy, prosperous, democratic society based on justice and fair-play. He also said the day is

See Page 12 Col. 7

Eight receive Ekushey Padak

The Government on Wednesday announced the "Ekushey Padak" award for 1991 to eight distinguished personalities in the fields of literature, education, journalism and art, reports BSS.

The recipients of the awards are: Dr. Ahmed Sharif and Prof. Kabir Chowdhury (Literature), Prof. Salahuddin Ahmed and Prof. A. M. Haroon-ar-Rashid (Education), Faiz Ahmed (Journalism), Begum Sanjeda Khatun (Music), Md. Aminul Huq (drama), and Kazi A. Baset (painting).

Zia resorted to killings, says Hasina

NAGARKANDA, Feb 20:

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina today said her party was pledge-bound to eradicate poverty and hunger, reports BSS.

"If voted to power we will ensure the five basic needs of the people — food, shelter, clothing, education and health-care", she declared in a big public meeting here.

The Awami League chief on

the final day of her six-day current round of tour addressed eight big public meetings in Kashinathpur, Alfadanga, Bishpur, Kashani, Sadarpur, Nagarkanda, Kaderi and Rajbari in the greater Faridpur district. Besides she also addressed at least 40 wayside gatherings including Harid ashpur Ghat, Dumudia, Bijoy-pasha, Gopinathpur, Gona- See Page 12 Col. 5

Army units move to UZs from tomorrow

Star Report

Army units will move to upazila headquarters from Friday to help the civil administration hold the parliamentary elections peacefully.

Official sources told the Daily Star that mobile army units will be stationed at upazila and district headquarters. They will not go to polling centres. Polling centres in 298 constituencies will be guarded by para-military forces, police and ansars. Army will assist them to maintain peace.

Special security measures have been taken for metropolitan cities where Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) will be deployed to guard the polling centres.

Election Commission has finalised all arrangements for holding the polls. Ballot papers have been despatched to all returning officers. The secretaries are moving to different districts to discuss the polling arrangements with officials and elite of the districts.

Check posts to search for illegal arms

The government has decided to set up check posts at convenient points to search for illegal arms, explosives and other dangerous materials in all kinds of transports, an official press release said, reports BSS.

The government also decided to prohibit the entry of all kinds of transports including the motor cycles within 400 yards of any polling centre.

Concerned district magistrates under Clause 144 of 1898 Act would impose such restrictions in due time.

Police Commissioners would also impose similar restrictions in their respective metropolitan areas.

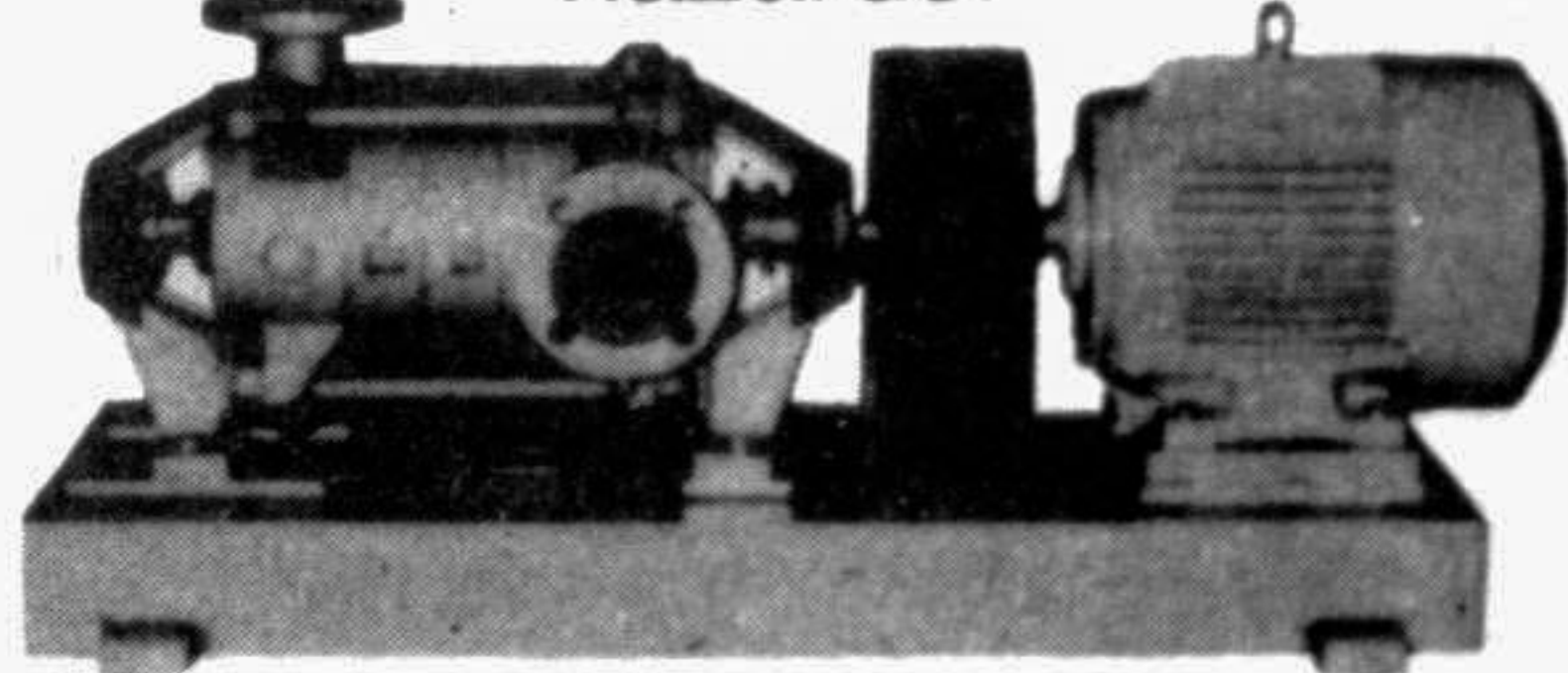
Govt awaiting inquiry reports to decide fate of ATPs

Star Report

Bangladesh Biman is awaiting two enquiry reports to decide the future of two ATP aircraft which were inducted into the fleet of the national airlines. The two ATPs of Biman procured from Britain remain grounded since early January due to technical faults.

A high official of the Civil See Page 12 Col. 6

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