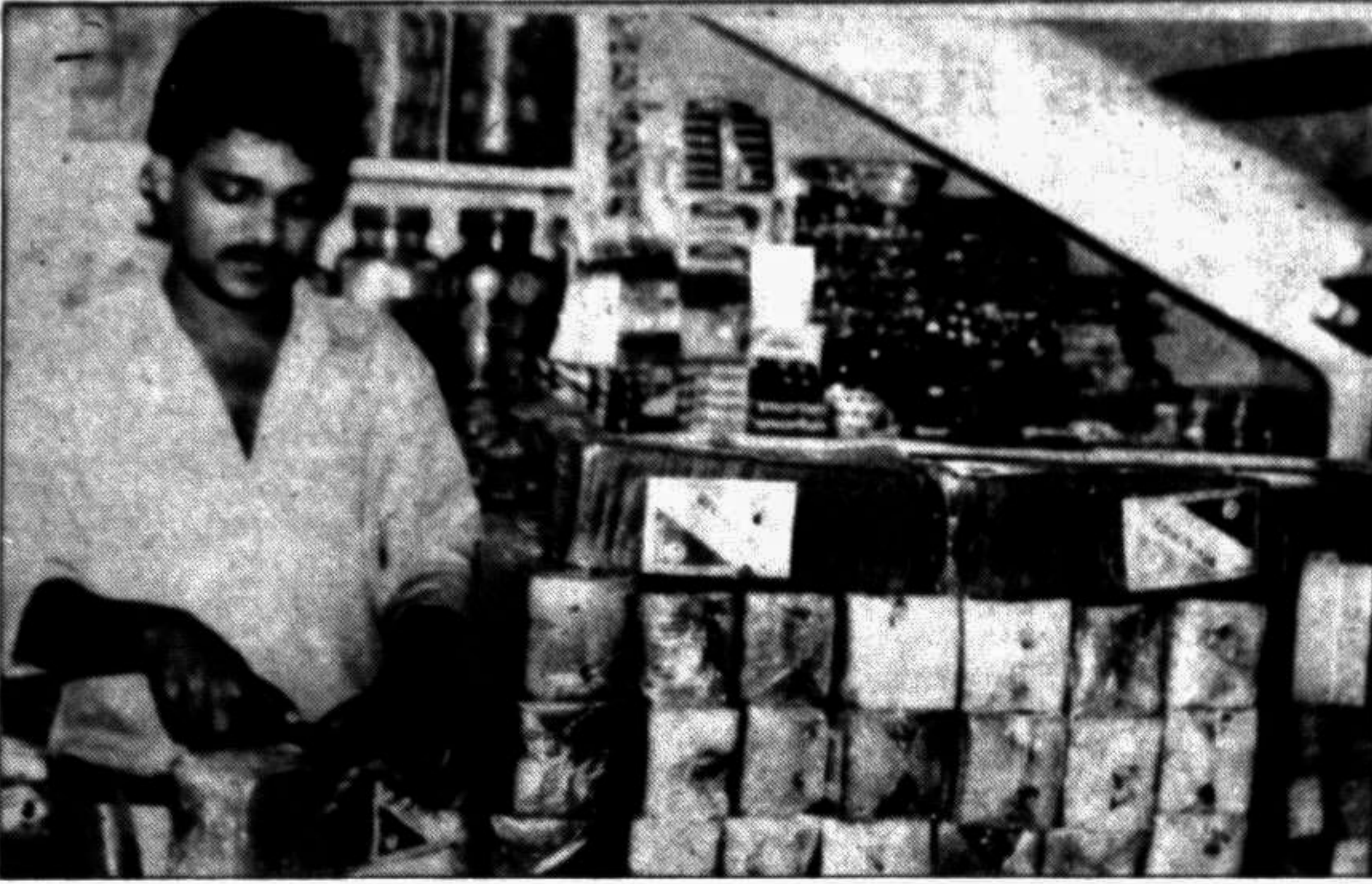


DOWN TO EARTH



Half a loaf is not better

By Khalilur Rahman

Half a loaf is better than more. As we all know, this old saying teaches us a widely accepted truth that is better to take what one can get than to run the risk of having nothing. If we take just the literal meaning of this maxim, it will be readily accepted by all the consumers that loaves of bread are available in plenty in the city stores and there is no risk of losing anything. But what is not, in most cases, known to buyers is that they always run the risk of getting underweight loaves of bread. In fact a variety of milk bread produced under different brand names by various manufacturers does not have the weight inscribed prominently in the wrapper of each piece of loaf.

Before the introduction of metric unit of weight in 1977 a standard milk bread used to weigh one pound usually. The name 'paurooti' in Bangla, some say, is derived from 'pound root'. The word 'milk' added to the bread by manufacturers suggest that the item soaked in milk can be eaten with convenience.

However, conversion of pound into metric system reduced the weight of a bread. One pound comes to around 455 grams. Initially, the bread weighed 450 grams instead of 455. Then the government issued an instruction under the provisions of Finance Act saying that there would be no excise duty on loaf of bread weighing up to 400 grams. The

bread producers took the opportunity and wasted no time to reduce the weight to 400 grams and the price was fixed at Taka 7 from the previous price of Taka 6.

Over the last five years, a 400-gram-loaf gradually shed its weight and has now settled at only 350 grams. Interestingly, the weight inscribed in each packet of loaf shows the weight at 400 grams. Some of the famous bread manufacturers have also resorted to such practice of selling underweight loaves of bread. The price of bread has also recorded a sharp rise. It varies from Taka 8 to Taka 12 per piece of 350-gram bread.

A government official told the Daily Star that the bread producers have been deceiving the buyers for quite a long time by selling underweight loaves but charging higher price. I am in the habit of buying different varieties of loaves of bread and weighing those on a mini scale at my residence. I also purchase bread from various shops in the city. The weight of a standard full-size bread is always 350 grams though it is imprinted as 400 grams, the official added. He further said that hundreds of other local bakeries producing loaves maintain no weight charts and the products are sold without wrappers. Prices of these loaves range between Taka 7 and Taka 8 per piece of full-size bread.

With regard to a section of the bread manufacturers who

are deceiving the consumers for so many years, an official of the Commerce Ministry told the Daily Star that it was surely a punishable offence. He said that the sale of every consumer goods, either locally produced or imported, is regulated by the office of the Controller General of Prices under the Commerce Ministry. Weight, prices and all other related matters are supposed to be supervised by the Controller General. But the facilities available at the commerce department to enforce well-defined measures are quite inadequate. The official, however, said that metropolitan ordinance empowers the police authority in the city to take appropriate action in such case of deception. The police personnel can even apprehend a trader not using standard weight while selling commodities.

Another official of the Finance Ministry told me that commodities are being sold in the old seer and chhatak in many places of the country even after introduction of metric system 14 years ago. Citing from his own experience, the official said that most of the traders at Tarabo and Pakundia markets, 10 miles away from the metropolis, are yet to use metric unit. They are comfortably using weights of seer and chhatak without any obstacle.

Nobody knows how long it will take for full implementation of the metric system of weight in the country.

Police storm two ROK universities

SEOUL (South Korea), June 6: Some 4,000 riot police stormed two universities and a cosmetics company Thursday to search for student and labour leaders as the government intensified its crackdown on six weeks of violent protests, reports AP.

Also, for the first time in memory, citizens bodily halted fighting between police and students.

In a highly unusual move for Koreans, about 20 neighbourhood women rushed to an intersection, littered with fire-bombs and tear gas canisters, and staged a sit-down in the middle of the fray. Fighting stopped and other people gathered.

"Who are you?" yelled student protesters at about 200 people outside Seoul's Korea University Wednesday night.

"We have had enough," shouted back Kim Yong-kyu, 53, a shopkeeper. "What do you guys think you're doing? We cannot live like this."

"You guys must know that

public opinion has turned against you," an elderly man shouted at about 400 student protesters. Koreans normally observe protests without interfering.

Meanwhile, the government carried out a massive nationwide manhunt for 150 student and dissident leaders accused of instigating violent anti-government protests that began after the April 26 killing of a student.

Earlier this week, dissidents attacked Prime Minister Chong Won-shik, a professor-turned Prime Minister. Chong was kicked, punched and pelted with raw eggs and flour after he delivered a lecture on a Seoul campus. Middle-class Koreans, many of whom have been silent, saw the student attack on the Prime Minister as the last straw.

Many were already concerned over air laden with tear gas, traffic jams created by blocked streets and lost business in areas where clashes take place.

Rival student groups hold rally at DU

By DU Correspondent

Rival student organizations continued demonstrations by holding rallies and processions on the Dhaka University Campus Thursday.

Jattiyatbadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) reiterated its demand for immediate arrest of the killers of Dr. Shamsul Alam Khan Milon. Bangladesh Chhatra League (S-A), Jatiya Chhatra League and Bangladesh Chhatra League (N-S) demanded withdrawal of the cases filed against nine student leaders in connection with the assault on Jamaat leader Maulana Matiar Rahman Nizami on the campus earlier.

BCL (S-A) and its associate student groups also demanded ban on communal politics and expulsion of Jamaat leader Golem Azam from the country.

Meanwhile, an uneasy calm situation prevailed on the campus with the slogans and counter-slogans of the rival student groups and presence of outsiders in the residential halls.

The Midnight File

UN Council should oversee

Iraqi arms ban: Perez

UNITED NATIONS, June 6: The indefinite ban on weapons sales and transfers to Iraq should be enforced by the Security Council's sanctions committee, UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar recommended Thursday, reports AP.

Rafsanjani invited to Riyadh

TEHERAN, June 6: Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani today received an invitation to visit Riyadh, in the latest move between the two countries to consolidate their recently restored diplomatic ties, reports AFP.

Devaluation

From Page 1 Col. 8
Way presented at the seminar at TSC, on Thursday.

Referring to the government policy for expansion of the private sector, he said the success of the policy largely depends on the recovery of outstanding loans amounting to Tk 10,000 crore.

"Imposition of fresh taxloads and liabilities of austerity on the people without realising outstanding loans and taxes and punishing the cor-

rupts by the elected government will amount to betrayal with the mass movement," the paper said.

The seminar, organised by the Bangladesh Centre for Policy Studies (BSPOS), was presided over by Dr Mahbub Hossain, Director, BIDS, Dr Shah Alam Mollah, a leader of the United Communist League, Dr Anu Mohammad of Jahangirnagar University and Nur Mohammad of BCPS took part in the discussion.



Partial view of the public meeting organised by city BNP at the Gulistan square on Thursday. — Star photo

Khaleda: Bid to destabilise govt

From Page 1 Col. 7

This was a success of democracy she said adding on no previous occasions the international community extended help with such a spirit.

The Prime Minister said members of foreign teams went to the affected areas to see for themselves relief operations and were full of praise. There was no corruption in relief distribution as was seen before. She said the Armed Forces, Bangladesh Rifles, Police, Ansars, NGOs, political parties and others worked wholeheartedly because of their sense of responsibility to a democratically elected government.

She said the success in facing the aftermath of the cyclone and flood was not a success of herself or her ministers, but a success of the people who had voted BNP to power.

The BNP chairperson said those who could not accept BNP's success were creating violence to dislodge it. Students had fought to resist autocracy for the last nine years. What was the justification of inciting trouble in the campus

after the fall of autocracy, she asked. She said we had fulfilled the demand of students by raising the age limit to 30 years for government jobs. They should now fulfil the demand of the people by devoting themselves to studies, she said.

The Prime Minister warned that terrorism would not be tolerated. Anybody found involved in terrorist activities will be punished, no matter which party he belongs to.

Referring to the foreign aid pledged by the Paris Aid Club meeting, she said the donors would give 230 crore dollars this time as against 180 crore dollars last year. Aid to be received from Japan is yet to be included in the total commitment, she said. Begum Zia said this reflected confidence of the donors in the democratically elected government.

Referring to her recent visit to Saudi Arabia she said she was given a rousing reception because her government was backed by the people. Saudi Arabia, which has committed Taka 400 crore for post-cyclone reconstructions would give more assistance for im-

plementing permanent cyclone preventative measures.

Begum Zia said the Government had also received commitment from Kuwait to re-employ all Bangladeshis who were repatriated in the wake of the Gulf war. Kuwait and other Arab countries would employ more Bangladeshis, she said.

LGRD Minister and Secretary General of BNP, Abdus Salam Talukder alleged that conspiracies were being hatched at home and abroad to remove BNP from power and disturb its relentless efforts to give democracy a permanent shape.

He further alleged that certain political party was conspiring against the BNP Government by issuing motivated and misleading statements regarding the form of government. He made it clear that BNP would settle the issue on the basis of people's opinion.

Without naming the party Salam Talukder said it had failed to do any good to the people while it ruled the country during 1972-75 and pushed the nation toward anarchism and instability.

Hasina: June 7

From Page 1 Col. 8

paved the way of liberation war in 1971.

In a message on the occasion, Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina Thursday recalled the significance of "June 7" in our national life and said the spirit of this day would continue to inspire people in the days ahead to realise their rights.

In a message commemorating the "June 7," she said it was on this day, 1966, people of erstwhile East Pakistan rose against the rule of Pakistani rulers on the basis of the six-point demand given by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The six-point demand, which was the magna carta of the people of this country, gradually paved the way for the independence of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina said.

The Awami League chief said the Pakistani rulers in those days had threatened that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman would remain in jail for the rest of his life and instituted a false "Agartala conspiracy case"

against him and many of the patriotic sons of the soil. But, she said, the people could not be suppressed and Bengali nation eventually achieved their desired hard earned independence. "June 7" remains a red letter day in our history although the occasion seem to be losing its significance when calculated efforts were being made to distort the history of this nation," she said.

Awami League and BKSAL have chalked out elaborate programmes to observe the day.

AL programmes on the day includes a flag raising ceremony at the party offices, laying floral wreaths at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's residence and a discussion programme at the party central office on Saturday at 5 pm. AL General Secretary, Begum Sajeda Choudhury, urged all party members to observe the historic "June 7."

BKSAL will also observe the day with a discussion meeting at the central party office in Nawabpur road on Friday.

One detained from meeting venue, later released

By Staff Correspondent

Police picked up a young man from the public meeting of Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia at Gulistan while she was addressing it, Thursday afternoon.

Police caught the person when BNP workers at the meeting were beating him indiscriminately soon after a section of the audience began running helter skelter.

Police said they later released the detained persons because he was one of the audience and not responsible for the incident. The reason why a section of the audience was running away could not be known.

Gorbachev invited to London

LONDON, June 6: Prime Minister John Major has proposed inviting Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev to London immediately after next month's Group of Seven summit meeting, his office said Thursday, reports AP.

Tanks silence fundamentalist stir Nighttime curfew in Algeria

ALGIERS, June 6: After army tanks silenced fundamentalist unrest, President Chadli Bendjedid tightened his grip on this shuttered city Thursday by imposing a nighttime curfew and banning public gatherings, reports AP.

The curfew affected the capital, Algiers, and three surrounding departments. Between midnight and 3.30 am only health workers, civil defense officials, collectors and Algerian journalists will be allowed to circulate.

The curfew was imposed after the Islamic Salvation Front, which had spearheaded 11 days of riots and demonstrations against the government, reacted to the imposition of the state of siege Tuesday night by calling for a continuation of a general strike.

The FIS, as it is known here, called on its members to continue marching "if possible" while "respecting public order and avoiding confrontations."

In a statement posted on the front door of its headquarters, the FIS stressed that any public gathering must be "strictly controlled". It indicated

strikes should continue unless ordered stopped by the government.

Shortly after announcing the curfew early Thursday, the military authorities assigned to maintain public order under the state of emergency announced that all marches and public gatherings were strictly forbidden.

Algiers on Wednesday seemed a ghost town: nearly all stores were closed, traffic was nearly nonexistent.

CUCSU ultimatum to punish Shibir terrorists

CHITTAGONG, June 6: Chittagong University Central Students Union (CUCSU) today gave the CU authorities 48 hours to fulfil its five-point demand including punishment of Shibir terrorists while the Shibirites paralysed the campus with a strike, reports UNB.

The ultimatum came from a meeting of teachers, guardians, students and democratic political organisations organised by CUCSU at the Dr Milon Square in the town this afternoon, while Islamic Chhatra Shibir enforced its 'Ultimatum Strike' on the campus.

No untoward incident, however, reported during the cross-action.

The CUCSU demands included restoration of academic atmosphere at the troubled university, arrest of the killers of Faruq and Sohel, recovery of arms and punishment of the Shibir activists it blamed for creating a reign of terror on the campus.

Meanwhile, the Chittagong University Teachers Association (CUTA) also issued a 48-hour ultimatum for the VC to resign, otherwise, they would boycott classes from Sunday.

Campus sources said the Shibir-supported Sangrami Chhatra Oikya would launch its ultimate action programme to oust Vice-Chancellor Prof Alamgir Mohammad Strajuddin.

Today's strike paralysed the entire University activities including classes and administrative functions.

Cabinet body on Hill Tracts meets Sunday

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, June 6: A meeting of the Chittagong Hill Tracts cabinet committee is expected to be held on Sunday in Dhaka to review the overall situation in the hill districts of Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban, highly placed sources said.

The meeting would be mainly aimed at making policy decisions on the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the source said. The Chittagong Hill Tracts cabinet committee is headed by the President.

Now, almost a lull continues in the insurgency-torn Hill Tracts.

Form of govt

From Page 1 Col. 4

Awami League would not be a problem. But BNP prefers to bring a new bill incorporating certain new provisions including further restrictions on floor crossing and balancing the powers of the President and the parliament, they said.

The BNP leaders are also contemplating a formal dialogue with the Awami League and other small parties who have representations in parliament, sources said.

Party insiders said, besides the form of government, BNP is also considering the issue of return of Acting President Justice Shahabuddin to his previous post of the Chief Justice of Bangladesh.

They said, if there was no consensus on the form of government, BNP would at least discuss the issue of return of Justice Shahabuddin to his desired position, with the other opposition parties.

They said it would require amendment to several clauses of the Constitution, which would be added to the "fourth schedule".

Saudi team due today

A seven-member Saudi delegation led by Vice-Chairman of Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) Dr Abdul Aziz Mohammad Al-Turki arrives Dhaka today (Friday) on a seven-day official visit to Bangladesh, reports BSS.

Saudi Arabia announced 106 million US dollars as grant for cyclone rehabilitation of Bangladesh and this was finalised during the recent visit of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to Saudi Arabia.

The delegation will identify the projects and take necessary programmes for the utilisation of the Saudi fund for reconstruction of cyclone devastated infrastructure in Bangladesh.

During its stay the delegation will visit different cyclone devastated areas

AL call to BNP

From Page 1 Col. 3

The resolution said Awami League, with the support of other opposition groups, submitted a draft constitutional amendment bill during the first session of the fifth parliament, which was approved by the Parliamentary Committee on Private Members Bill.

But, unfortunately, the tabling of the bill is being delayed because of unwillingness of the majority party creating confusion among the people about the governance of the country.

The resolution reiterated Bangladesh Awami League was committed to implementing the joint declaration of the three alliances. Awami League under the leadership of leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina would continue its efforts in this regard, it said.

It hoped the ruling party would initiate the desired move at the outset of the next session by shirking all hesitation.

Otherwise, it cautioned, BNP would have to bear all responsibilities for any stalemate.

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