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# The Daily Star

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## Inside Today Magazine



**Rabindra Jayanti**  
 Special  
 Page 9, 10  
 Article

Some Thoughts on the  
 Coming Budget  
 Page 4

## International



**Imelda campaigning**  
 hard for presi-  
 dent's post

Anti-Suchinda  
 demonstration  
 continues  
 Page 5

## Business

Missions abroad can  
 help boost export  
 Page 7

## Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day



**Ogo Pathero Saathi,**  
 Nomi Barongbar  
 Page 3

## NEWS BRIEFS

### Transport strike in Sirajganj

SIRAJGANJ, May 7: Road communications in the district remained paralysed since this morning as transport workers went on a wildcat strike. They called for the strike when authorities denied bail to a jailed transport driver who had submitted appeal against his two years imprisonment for killing one person in a road accident, reports UNB.

### Rab hospitalised

JSD leader A S M Abdur Rab was admitted to PG Hospital Thursday following serious illness, said a press release. Rab who was released from jail recently, is suffering from different complex diseases, reports UNB.

### New warning to Iraq

UNITED NATIONS, May 7: The United States, France and Britain have issued a new warning to Iraq against deploying missiles or flying its planes north of the 36th parallel, diplomatic sources said here today. The warning came in a meeting between the UN ambassadors of the three nations and their Iraqi counterpart, reports AFP.

### Yeltsin C-in-C

MOSCOW, May 7: President Boris Yeltsin signed decrees today creating a Russian army and naming himself as its Commander-in-Chief, ITAR-Tass news agency said, reports Reuter.

### Charles to visit HK without Di

LONDON, May 7: Prince Charles will be on his own when he visits Hong Kong in early November, and not accompanied by Princess Diana, Buckingham Palace said here Thursday, reports AFP.

## 'Symbolic' Rohingya repatriation begins May 15

By Staff Correspondent

The repatriation of Myanmar refugees back to their homeland from Bangladesh starts not before May 21 while the process begins symbolically on May 15 to honour an agreement signed yesterday, according to a Foreign Ministry source.

The accord, initiated in Dhaka by Ambassador Mostafa Farooq Mohammad and Ambassador Soe Myint on behalf of their respective governments, was based on the agreed minutes that the senior officials of the two countries had signed at the conclusion of the Myanmar Foreign Minister's visit April 28. On that day, the Foreign Ministers of the two countries also signed a joint statement 'agreeing' on the early repatriation of the Rohingya refugees.

The technical level working groups comprising senior officials of the two countries after

two rounds of talks on April 26 and 27 signed the agreed minutes as the Myanmar side pleaded for further consultations with the authorities in Yangon before signing an agreement by the two ambassadors.

In what appeared to be a further show of goodwill, the authorities have said that they would provide the refugees with 'reasonable amount of food following their repatriation.'

They have also agreed to provide relief assistance — food, shelter, materials and some working capitals — to be arranged by the UNHCR if the 'situation warrants', said a Foreign Office official quoting yesterday's agreement on the modalities.

Yet, there has been skepticism about the success of the repatriation initiative as the Rohingyas continue to come.

The number has already crossed 2,40,000, giving rise to such fears.

When asked a senior Foreign Ministry official said 'We're in touch with the Yangon authorities.'

He told The Daily Star that Foreign Minister A S M Mustafizur Rahman had had telephonic contacts over the matter with his Myanmar counterpart.

The official also said that the seniormost civil servants of Relief and Immigration Ministries of Myanmar will soon be coming to Bangladesh in connection with the repatriation.

Meanwhile, Myanmar Foreign Minister Ohn Gya visited the Akyab region where the Rohingyas live. Yangon authorities have already dispatched officials to deal with the repatriation.

See Page 12 Col 7

## Asia Watch calls for sanctions against Myanmar

WASHINGTON, May 7: The Myanmar military junta is trying to drive 1.4 million Rohingya Muslims out of the north western Arakan state by a systematic campaign of torture, rape, murder and religious persecution, a human rights group said, reports AFP.

In a report released Thursday, Asia Watch rejected as 'blatant lies' the Myanmar military junta's claim that the refugees are illegal immigrants who belong to Bangladesh.

'The refugees are leaving because they are being raped, tortured, made to work as slaves and banned from practising their religion,' the report said.

The group called upon the world community to assist neighbouring Bangladesh in providing for some 200,000 Rohingyas, who fled their country since late 1991, and to enforce an international arms and trade embargo against Myanmar until persecution of the Muslim minority stops.

In its report, prepared on the basis of the testimony of numerous refugees, the US-based human rights group said, 'the Myanmar military has clearly embarked on a policy of

See Page 12 Col 6

## Passengers harassed at ZIA on false currency grounds

By Sabir Mustafa

A number of bona fide travellers with confirmed tickets on the Dhaka-Bangkok-Seoul route are being routinely harassed and refused permission to embark, possibly illegally, by immigration officers at Zia International Airport, a senior official of a major foreign airline said in Dhaka Wednesday.

Speaking anonymously to The Daily Star, the official said that Seoul-bound passengers with valid tickets and other relevant documents were being told by immigration officers that they needed to carry US\$2,000 in foreign currency with them in order to embark.

For the past several weeks, an average of 55 ticket holders of one airline alone have been off-loaded by ZIA immigration for failing to show \$2,000.

'This is totally strange, because Bangladesh Bank rule says a passenger can only carry \$1,200 at a time, and a total of \$1,800 in the course of a whole year,' the airline official said.

The official said immigration

officers refer to a 'Home Ministry circular' which, according to them, prohibits travel to Seoul unless the passenger can show \$2,000.

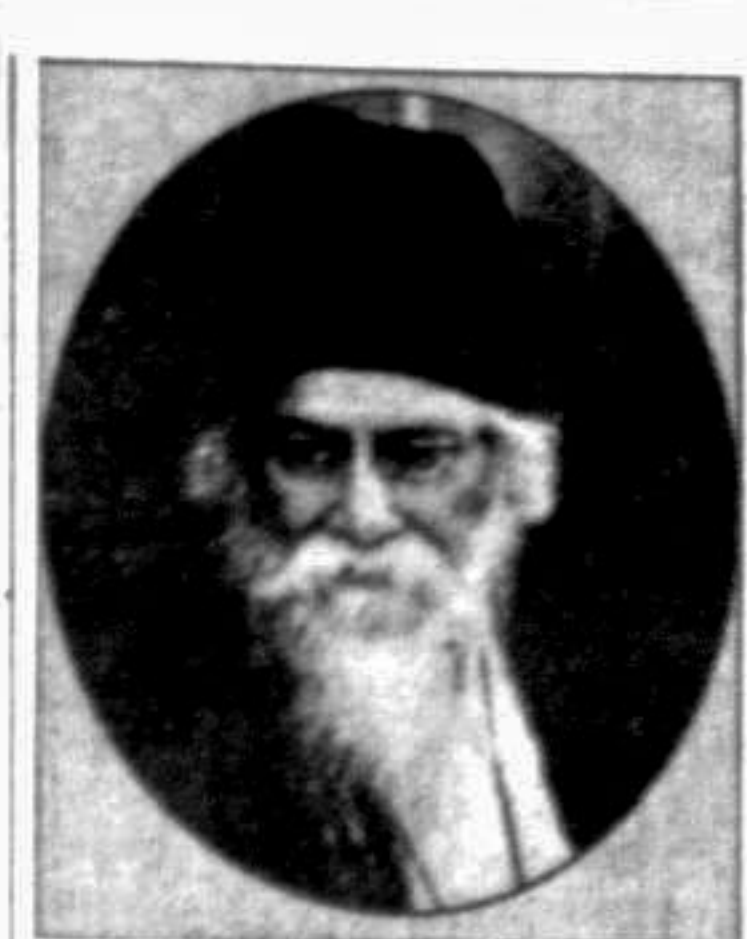
The Ministry of Home Affairs, however, denied that any such circular had been issued, the official said. Bangladesh Bank, which is the principal authority regulating foreign exchange, also confirmed that the maximum foreign currency allowed to a traveller is \$1,200, and not \$2,000.

The airline official said that passengers coming back to demand refunds did not have any markings on their passports by the ZIA immigration, as should be the case for off-loaded passengers.

'According to existing rules, immigration officers are supposed to mark on their passports the reasons for their being off-loaded, like invalid ticket, lack of visa, foreign currency or whatever,' he told The Star.

The official feared that a

See Page 12 Col 8



## Tagore's birthday today

By Staff Correspondent

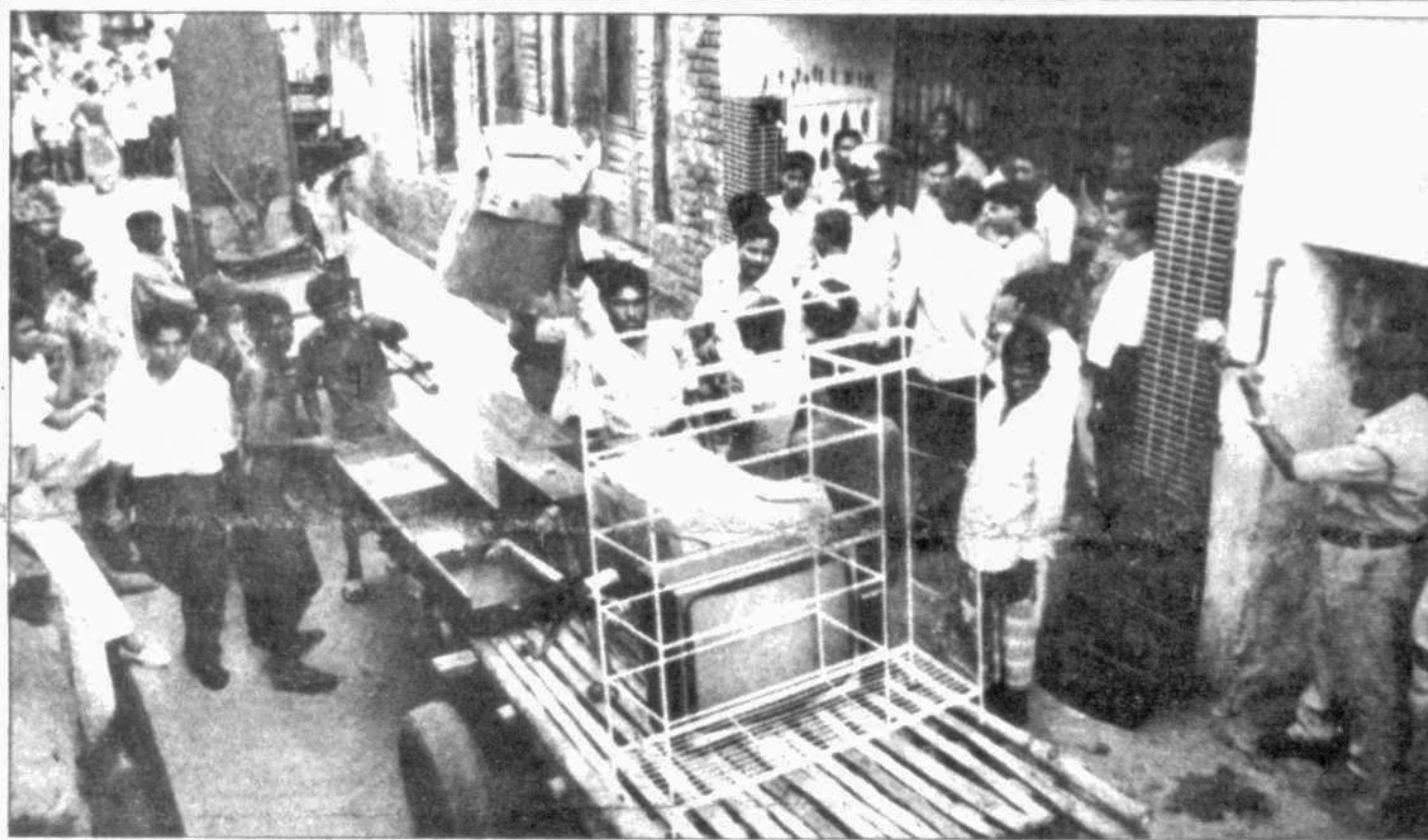
Today is Baishakh 25, 1399, the 131st 'Rabindra Joyanti' or birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore.

As in previous years, the celebration of Tagore's birth this year carries a special symbolic importance for the cultural identity of the Bengali nation.

The significance of the day for our national cultural life is reflected in the programmes of celebration to be held at the national level at Shahjapur Kuthibari in the district of Sirajganj today.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will inaugurate the three-day

See Page 12 Col 7



Police attaching household items from the Jogi Nagar residence of the BCI chairman Mustafizur Rahman yesterday. — Star photo

## Court order to attach movable property Massive hunt for BCI directors

By Staff Correspondent

Police launched a massive hunt on Thursday to attach the movable property of the directors of Bangladesh Commerce and Investment Ltd (BCI) and seized some items from the houses.

However, the police attempt was partly frustrated as most of the directors fled from their houses beforehand.

A class one magistrate, along with a contingent of police, went to the houses of Mustafizur Rahman, Managing Director of BCI and Nizamuddin, Director of the same company.

Sutrapur police said that the items seized include TVs, sofa sets, and other household items.

Police also sealed their houses.

Motijheel police went to

the houses of Khadeza Begum, Saleh Ahmed, Farid Akhtar, Habib Zaman and Mahmuda Zaman. However, none of them were found to be residing in

See Page 12 Col 8

**BCI to sue BB**  
 By Staff Correspondent

The BCI authorities have decided to sue the Bangladesh Bank challenging the suspension order on the activities of the company, a source said. The case will be filed Sunday.

Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud will move the case for the BCI, sources close to the BCI said. They said that the authorities have already prepared all the documents and other necessary papers for the case.

## Khaleda asks partymen to resist anti-people activities

The leaders of Dhaka city BNP headed by its president Lt Gen (Retd) Mir Shawkat Ali, MP, met Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at the party central office here Thursday evening, reports BSS.

Mir Shawkat apprised Begum Zia, who is also the BNP Chairperson, of the activities of city BNP.

Begum Zia called upon them to strengthen the party activities from grassroots level. She urged them to work for the welfare of the people in their respective areas in the city.

The Prime Minister called for resisting toll collection, violence and other anti-people activities in cooperation with the people of the area. Begum Zia asked them to identify local problems and try to resolve those.

## US, Saudi Arabia control Sharif's govt: Jamaat

ISLAMABAD, May 7: The head of Pakistan's fundamentalist Jamaat-i-Islami Party today accused Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government of harbouring an American 'virus' and being 'indirectly controlled' by Saudi Arabia.

In an interview with AFP, senator Qazi Hussain Ahmed, leader of the Jamaat-i-Islami, said that he had withdrawn his party from Sharif's ruling coalition on Tuesday because the Prime Minister had 'ignored my advice' on Afghanistan when conducting behind the scenes negotiations with the Mujahideen.

'They (the United States) inspired the idea of the communist militia holding on to power,' Ahmed said, adding that the United States had planted this idea and the Pakistani government had then been instrumental in trying to see it through.

It is 'very obvious,' he said, that the Pakistan government was 'under American influence.'

'There is a virus inside the government machinery. The Americans are directing the people,' he added, while noting that Sharif's government was also 'indirectly controlled by the Saudi government.'

'The Americans have shifted their guns from the communists against the (Muslim) fundamentalists,' he said.

He also attacked the way in which Gulbuddin Hekmatyar of the Hezb-i-Islami, 'the strongest group in Afghanistan,' had been totally ignored in the negotiations which took place between officials from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on Afghanistan's future.

On Wednesday, Sharif had said that Ahmed, who had been one of the partners in his ruling alliance for more than four years, was responsible for this week's fighting between different Mujahideen factions in Kabul.

'These accusations are totally wrong,' Ahmed said, and

predicted Sharif would soon find himself facing major difficulties holding on to power.

Meanwhile, PTI said, the Awami National Party leader Khan Abdul Wali Khan, had expressed the fear that the Pakhtun Mujahideen chief Gulbuddin Hekmatyar might be 'eliminated' and has warned that fighting for Kabul was to escalate.

'His (Hekmatyar's) removal would take place with his elimination which would happen inside Afghanistan and not in Pakistan due to certain reasons,' the Khan said in an interview to a local daily.

ANP leader disclosed that during a secret meeting with Hekmatyar, he had advised him that lakhs had lost their lives in the name of Islam but still the victory was a far cry.

Therefore, he suggested that the Pakhtun resistance leader should join hands with the nationalist and all other Mujahideen factions for the Pakhtun cause. Hekmatyar declined to do so, he said.

## 'Zainul museum out of Cultural Ministry control'

The government has directed the trustee board of 'Zainul Abedeen Sangrahashala' to take necessary measures on emergency basis for the recovery of the stolen pieces of art from the museum, reports BSS.

According to an official handout in Dhaka Thursday, the government has given the directives, considering the great contribution of the Shilpacharya to the national culture.

Referring to a news item, captioned '17 valuable pieces of art of Shilpacharya Zainul Abedeen were stolen (from the Zainul Abedeen Sangrahashala in Mymensingh),' the Ministry of Cultural Affairs stated that the sangrahashala (museum), established under non-government initiative, was an organisation out of the control of the ministry.

The Deputy Commissioner of Mymensingh is the chairman of the trustee board, constituted to run the museum, and members of the family of the artist and others are the members of the board, the handout pointed out.

## ADB to give more aid for capital market

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman Thursday said Asian Development Bank (ADB) would provide additional support in the capital market development of Bangladesh, reports BSS.

The Finance Minister said this on his return home from Hong Kong after attending the 25th meeting of the Board of Governors of ADB.

Saifur Rahman who is also the Governor of ADB from Bangladesh, said the share of Bangladesh in the Asian Development Fund (ADF) would be retained.

He said the members of ADB underscored the need for increasing the size of ADF. He said the President of the bank, Kimmasa Tarumizu expressed his concern over the present size of the ADF and called upon the newly industrialised countries (NICs) of Asia to increase their contribution to the ADF.

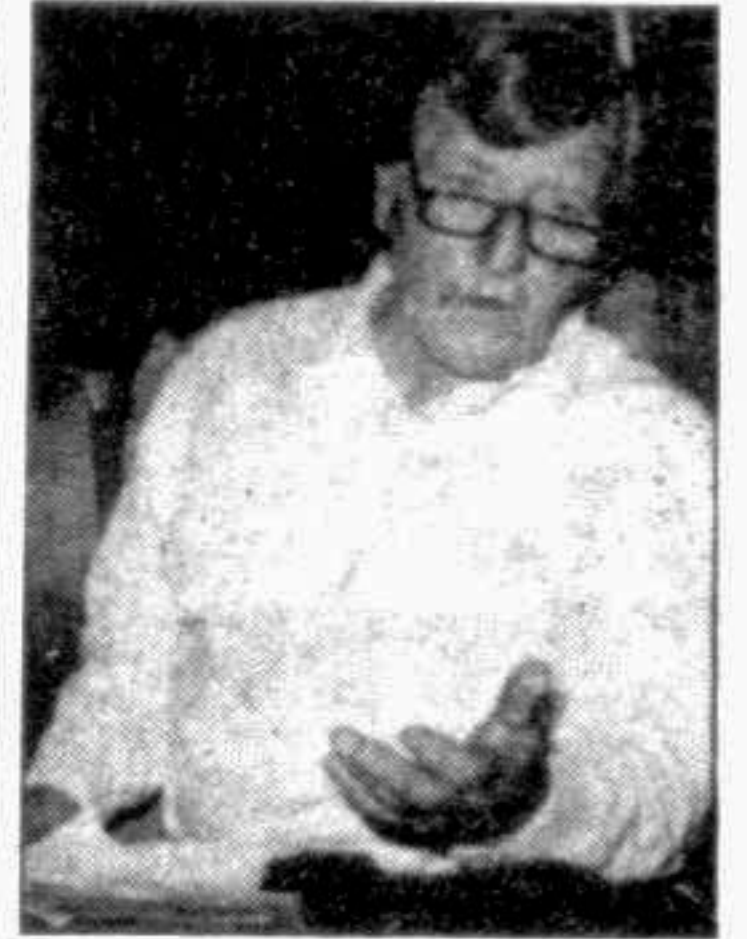
The ADB President also emphasised the need for increasing ordinary capital resource of the bank, he added.

The Finance Minister said the ADB President lauded the

success of the Bangladesh government under the leadership of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in managing macro economy, mobilising domestic resources, containing inflation and controlling unproductive expenditure.

Saifur Rahman said the ADB President was immensely impressed by the success of the government within a period of only one year in mobilising domestic resource to the extent of around 24 per cent in the Annual Development Programme (ADP). The first government of BNP in 1981 could contribute around 33 per cent to the development budget from domestic resources which had been reduced to nil during the nine years of the autocratic rule of Ershad, the Minister said.

The ADB President also lauded the programme of rehabilitation of 9000 primary schools for which the government had already earmarked Taka 100 crore. Kimmasa appreciated the government's programmes in poverty alleviation and social sectors too.



## Former British minister wants probe into CHT incident

By Staff Correspondent

Lord David Ennals, the Chairman of the Asia Committee of the British Refugee Council (BRC), has urged the Bangladesh Government to conduct an 'independent judicial investigation' into the alleged 'massacre' and the human rights violations in the

See Page 12 Col 1

## Tehran behind bombing of Israeli embassy, says US

WASHINGTON, May 7: The United States has uncovered 'strong indications' that Iranian diplomats helped plan the March 17 bombing of the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires in which 29 people died and 225 were wounded, a senior State Department official said today.

The official, who spoke to Reuters on condition of anonymity, said Iranian embassies all over Latin America and elsewhere were collecting information on other possible targets for attack. They were concentrating on Israeli,

Jewish and American targets.

There are some indications that Iranian embassies in Latin America have been collecting information which might be important substantive background to planning such an attack,' said the official.

'My strong assessment is that Iran is busily collecting information in many parts of the world, including parts where security consciousness is relatively low compared to the Middle East and Europe,' he added.

But he said the United States did not have conclusive

proof of Iranian culpability.

The Iranian-backed Islamic Jihad group claimed responsibility for the March 17 blast but Iranian officials have repeatedly denied involvement.

The State Department official said there was evidence that known members of Islamic Jihad and Hizbollah, a closely related Islamic fundamentalist guerrilla group backed by Tehran, visited several Latin American capitals including Buenos Aires before the bombing.

The Buenos Aires bombing was widely seen as revenge for

Israel's killing in February of Sheikh Abbas Musawi, a prominent Hizbollah leader in Lebanon. That killing sparked several days of heavy fighting between Israel and Hizbollah in South Lebanon.

The State Department official said Iran, with the help of Syria, moved swiftly to replenish Hizbollah's arsenal, which had been depleted in the fighting. Tehran airlifted Katyusha rockets and other weapons to Damascus and sent them overland from there to the guerrillas.

'A lot of relatively heavy

equipment was used — Katyusha rockets in large numbers — and those have been resupplied via flights to Damascus and trucked into South Lebanon. So they are stoking the flames with Syrian cooperation in South Lebanon,' said the official.

He said Hizbollah could now be unleashed against Israel again at any time.

The State Department last week released its annual report on terrorism worldwide in which it identified Iran as one of six 'state sponsors' of terrorism. The other five were

Syria, Libya, Iraq, Cuba and North Korea.

The official said Iran had emerged as the most dangerous state sponsor of what the United States considered as terrorism, despite the fact that Rafsanjani had cultivated an image of a moderate.

The United States had warned governments around the world to beware of the threat. The official said the Iranians might choose targets far from the Middle East because it would be more difficult to link them to such attacks.

## 'Hasina knows better money can't buy people's verdict'

The Secretary General of BNP and LORD and Cooperatives Minister, Barrister Abdus Salam Talukdar, Thursday urged the democracy-loving people to remain alert against false propaganda being resorted by a section of leaders and parties, reports BSS.

The BNP Secretary General in a statement refuted the allegations as levelled by the Awami League chief Sheikh

See Page 12 Col 7