

6 bills deferred

From Page 1 Col 7

bers said that the payment of pension to the MPs when he or she was not in the office was irrelevant and went against 'prestige' of the members.

Nizami's deferred bill sought life imprisonment for 'willful' desecration of the Quran or part of it and death sentence for defiling of the name of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) by words, either spoken or written, or by signs or visible representation, or by imputation or insinuation.

Nizami's request to defer the bill came following the assurance of the State Minister for Law Annuul Islam that the government would consider the proposed law.

The State Minister remarked that the matter was important and sensitive adding the government required discussion on it.

The proposed resolution that were deferred to the next working private members' day include setting up of a separate laboratory for quality control of drugs, building a container terminal near Export Processing Zone in Savar and issuance of administrative order for the registration of exchanged property, on the basis of power of attorney, in favour of concerned people bonding from India.

The resolutions deferred to the next private members day was moved respectively by Shakwat Hossain Bokul and Niamat Ullah Sabu of the BNP and Rafiqul Islam of the Awami League.

The House was adjourned at 9:40 last night.

There are some rules and procedures for fixing prices, he said adding that steps are being taken to keep the prices of agro-inputs within the reach of the farmers.

Earlier, the Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina called upon the Treasury bench not to reject the motion by mere strength of majority of voice as it related to the interest of the peasants.

She alleged that since coming to power the present government had increased the prices of fertilizers four times. She said that when the price of diesel was increased by the past autocratic regime, BNP along with other parties demanded withdrawal of the increased price. "Now they should not forget their commitment after going to power", she added.

She also said that the farmers would be inspired to increase their productions if the prices of agro-inputs including diesel were reduced.

Earlier placing his adjournment motion, Abul Kalam Azad argued that unless the prices of agro-inputs were reduced the farmers would lose their interest to grow crops. He said that the peasants were not even getting their production cost by selling the products. If the situation could not be changed within six months the country's agro-production might fall to a miserable extent, he maintained.

Referring to the campaign being launched by the present government to attain self-sufficiency in food, Azad said to attain this objective the government should reduce the prices of diesel which is the most important means of agro-production.

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Azad appealed to all members of the House irrespective of parties to approve the motion for the greater national interest.

Six members supported the motion of Azad and opted that the prices of diesel should be reduced immediately for the interest of the poor peasants of the country. The members are Mohammad Rahmat Ali (Gazipur), Prof Rafiqul Islam (Jessore) and Khan Tipu Sultan (Jessore) of Awami League and AM Riasat Ali (Sakthira), Mufti Maulana Abdus Sattar (Bagerhat) and Sheikh Ansar Ali of Jamaat.

Taking the floor Energy Minister Dr Khandkar Mosharrif Hossain said that the BNP government was quite aware of the interest of the peasants.

The minister proposed to send the motion of Azad to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Finance. But as the mover of the motion did not accept the proposal, it was given to vote and consequently the House rejected it in voice vote.

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Tk 178 cr for small units

From Page 1 Col 5

completed and the findings sent to the Board.

Replying to a question from AL member Md Abdul Awal Mian, the Minister said that during the first six months of this fiscal year the total amount of revenue collected from import tax stood at Taka 1338.68 crore, 45 per cent of the budget target of Taka 3265 crore for 1992-93.

Answering a supplementary question, Rahman clarified that the 1.8 billion US dollars foreign exchange reserve is not a big reserve for Bangladesh as we are going for a free market economy and according to the stipulations of the financial sector reform programme a reserve of a minimum of five months import requirements is needed and Bangladesh's monthly requirement stands at about 350 million dollars per month.

Replying to another question, Saifur Rahman informed the House that between 1990-91 and 1992-93 November the total amount of food aid 455 million dollars, commodity aid 981 million dollars and project aid totalled 2418 million dollars.

He added that the country received a total of 24 billion dollars since independence, of which, grants amounted to 47 per cent and loans 53 per cent. He said that the yearly repayment amounted to about 22 per cent of the total foreign exchange earnings of the country.

UNB adds: The Finance Minister refuted opposition contention that country's economy is in stagnation and said it was reeling out of past disarray to gain momentum.

"Our economic position is so sound that it can't be called stagnation in comparison with the world economic situation," he said, placing relevant indicators to improvement in the economic situation.

Saifur Rahman told Parliament that country's export growth was recorded 31 per cent and import growth 19 per cent. Four per cent growth of GDP was achieved this year, he said.

"Still, I'm not satisfied with the present position of our

economy," the Minister, however, told the House. The government has undertaken plans for setting up new agro-based industries and reactivating the sick industrial units. He said Tk 200 crore would be disbursed as 'term loan' by next June.

In reply to a supplementary from Advocate Devnath Shambhu (AL), Saifur Rahman said the government was striving to bring back discipline and accountability in the banking sector.

"I don't claim that I have succeeded in doing this. It's a very difficult job, but efforts are underway to remove all irregularities in the banking and financial sectors created over the years."

In reply to Abul Kalam Azad of Awami League, Rahman told the House that Tk 1474.41 crore had been earmarked for disbursing as loan among farmers during 1992-93 by Bangladesh Agriculture Bank, Rajshahi Agriculture Development Bank, Bangladesh Rural Development Board and National Cooperative Banks.

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Hepburn

From Page 1 Col 8

Geneva, said a relative who answered the door at the residence. She spoke on condition of anonymity.

The village was quiet on Thursday, and neighbours had tears in their eyes. One woman recalled that she used to meet Hepburn as they both walked their dogs in the village streets.

A small, black-bordered death announcement posted on the village notice board said her funeral service would be held in the village church on Sunday, followed immediately by burial in the local cemetery.

Hepburn epitomized high-fashion elegance and inspired many designers with her beauty, but spent her last years traveling the globe in jeans and T-shirts working for needy children as a goodwill UN ambassador.

As a child, she herself received help from the agency after surviving the last winter of World War II in Holland on a diet of mostly turnips.



Singers of different Nazrul Sangeet academies at the opening ceremony of Nazrul Song Festival at Shilpakala Academy auditorium in city yesterday. —Star Photo

Nazrul song festival begins

The four-day national Nazrul song festival began here yesterday evening with much enthusiasm at the Shilpakala Academy auditorium, reports BSS.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof Jahanara Begum inaugurated the festival.

Nazrul Academy, Bulbul Academy of Fine Arts, Hindol Sangit Academy, Agnibina Sangitayan, Dolon Champa Sangit Niketan, Surbani Lalitkala Academy, Ohvudaya and Udicht jointly organised the festival.

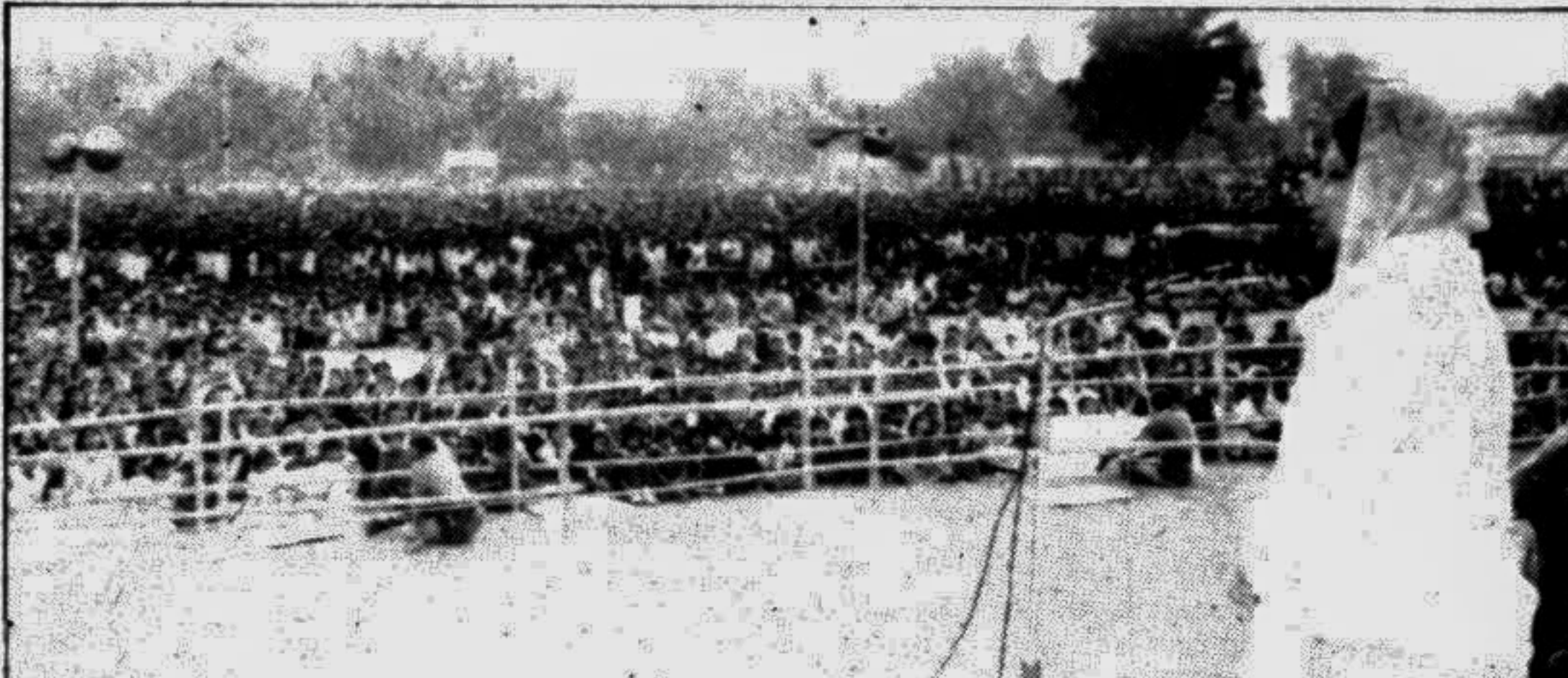
The four-day programme was dedicated to five eminent Nazrul song artists Mohammad Kashem popular known as K Malik, Abbasuddin Ahmed, Abdul Halim Choudhury, Kazi Sabbasachi Islam and Kazi Aniruddha Islam.

Addressing the inaugural function Prof Jahanara appreciated endeavours of different cultural organisations to enrich the Nazrul songs.

She called upon the concerned personalities to uphold the works of the National Poet through extensive research.

The Convenor of the festival Prof Rafiqul Islam in his address of welcome said, we want to stress a united efforts for the culture of the Nazrul songs.

The Secretary of the Cultural Affairs Ministry Islamuddin Malik, folklorist Dr Ashraf Siddiqui and Director General of Shilpakala Academy Mobararak Hossain Khan were present.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleida Zia addressing a public meeting in Serajganj Govt. College-maidan yesterday. —PID photo.

Police must come up to democratic aspirations of people: PM

From Page 1 Col 7

country self-reliant.

About the low price of rice, the Prime Minister said the government has taken steps to ensure fair price of paddy for the farmers. The government has ordered to procure BR-11, a particular variety of paddy which was earlier restricted for government purchase, she pointed out.

Begum Zia emphasised on setting up of different industries including dairy farms, poultry, pisciculture farms and other small and cottage industries which can help earn foreign exchange and create employment opportunities.

She called upon all to involve themselves in the development programmes of the government and mentioned the steps taken in education, women uplift and other sectors.

Referring to the local demands, the Prime Minister said steps are being taken to set up sugar mills in the area. She assured that the work for

PM: Election pledges

From Page 1 Col 7

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Clinton takes office

From Page 1 Col 2

Also, Clinton was expected to announce a policy in the next few days that would lift the military's ban on homosexuals. The New York Times and USA Today reported Thursday. First he will order the military to stop asking recruits about their sexual orientation and discharging people found to be gay, and later this year he will sign an executive order lifting the ban, the newspapers said.

McLarty could not say when a Clinton economic package would be offered. "We'll move forward when the president is ready to make that decision," he said.

McLarty said meetings with national security and economic advisers were on tap for Clinton's first full day as President.

Interviewed on NBC's 'Today' show, McLarty said he expects Hillary Rodham Clinton to be involved on "a number of domestic issues."

"She played an active role when Bill Clinton was governor of Arkansas," McLarty said.

Clinton joined Democrats for a late night of partying on Inauguration Day and passed up the sunrise jog he took his first few days in Washington.

For the most part, the new people in Washington — the Clinton people — were feeling their way along, and the government was in the hands of Bush administration holdovers and career civil servants.

New administrations are always slow to take off.

"People keep bumping into

Sick industries asked to apply for rehabilitation

The government has empowered the financing institutions and banks to resolve the hurdles of country's problem-ridden industries, reports UNB.

The entrepreneurs of inoperative but viable units can apply to the financing institutions for rehabilitation, credit rescheduling, fresh loans or exemption facility as well as consideration of other inconveniences, said an official announcement yesterday.

Such applications will be looked into from commercial point of view and good intentions of the entrepreneurs.

Rejected applicants may apply to the Review Committee constituted by the government for re-evaluation of their projects.

The committee will examine the management, market of the products, cost of production, profitability and risks and submit recommendations after review of the applications in monthly meetings.

Applications will have to be filed within two months of their rejection.

The Midnight File

Hundreds flee Kabul as fighting breaks out

KABUL, Jan 21: Afghan government forces and their radical opponents fought artillery duels in Kabul today, forcing hundreds of people to flee their homes. But no reliable estimate was available from either side of the number of casualties in the three days of fighting, which erupted after the government launched a sweep against the Hizb-1-Islami party of hardline Mujahideen leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, reports Reuter.

Ships collide off Indonesia

SINGAPORE, Jan 21: A supertanker collided with another ship off Indonesia Thursday, spilling oil that was set ablaze in the crash. Agents for the 260,000-ton Maersk Navigator said its crew of 24 abandoned the supertanker after it collided with the Sanko Honour, an empty 47,344-ton tanker. Crew members from both ships were reported unharmed, reports AP.

Police bar relatives from visiting deportees

ROSH HANIKRA (Israel), Jan 21: Police on Thursday blocked dozens of relatives in buses loaded with bags of food from visiting more than 400 Palestinian deportees camped on a snowy hillside in Lebanon. Their trip to the Rosh Hanikra border station came as UN Envoy Chinnmaya Gharekhan pursued talks with Israeli leaders in an attempt to win compliance with Security Council demands to return the exiles to Israel's occupied territories, reports AP.

BJP move to evict

From Page 1 Col 2

Many people who speak Bengali live in the Kalkaji suburb, but it is not known if they came to New Delhi from the Indian state of West Bengal or nearby Bangladesh, a predominantly Muslim nation.

When the protestors marched out of a park, police herded them into waiting buses, took them away and arrested them for violating a police ban on marching to a mostly Muslim neighbourhood, Niraj Kumar, a senior police officer said in an interview. Police won't determine the exact number of people arrested until later.

"There'll be a communal clash if we allow them to go to the Muslim areas," Kumar said.

AFP adds: Hindu militants are pressuring factors in Bombay to sack Muslim employees, an Indian communist union said here Wednesday, and demanded immediate government intervention.

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) said the management of major firms — Mahindra and Mahindra, and Larsen and Toubro — were attacked by Hindu thugs because they did not succumb to the demand.

A CITU statement here said the Hindu militant group Shiv Sena and other communal forces in Maharashtra are blatantly forcing the employers, to throw out minority workers from the undertakings and some units have succumbed to their blackmail."

Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, "batling to

10 shops gutted, 20 vehicles damaged as students go on rampage

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 21: At least 10 shops were set ablaze and 20 vehicles were damaged this afternoon at Mirsharhat, 30 kilometers off the city, when a group of unruly students went on rampage, witnesses said.

Police said the trouble began after a Chhatra League activist Shakhawt Hossain was stabbed by the supporters of the rival student group at Kamaldaha village of Mirsharhat Thana.

Nurses

From Page 1 Col 5

have left hospitals on the first day of the strike as they were not getting any service.

Meanwhile, leaders of the striking nurses Thursday held a meeting with high government officials to resolve the matter.

Source said that the government side indicated that some genuine demands of the nurses will be considered.

Shafiqul Islam, General Secretary of Diploma Student Nurses' Association (DSNA) said, "the talks were fruitful."

"We are expecting some of our demands will be met by the government."

"We will call off our indefinite strike if our just demands are met", Shafiqul Islam said.

The meeting continued for two and a half hour at the conference room of the Health Ministry.

The striking nurses also brought out a procession Thursday in Dhaka and staged a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club in support of their demands.

Jessore Chhatra League leader murdered

From Our Correspondent

JESSORE, Jan 21: An activist of Awami League-backed Chhatra League (M-I), Manwar Hossain Litan was killed by his rivals at Karbala in the town at 10:30 am today.

According to witnesses, a group of six youngsters led by Nawab Shaheen, an expelled Juba League leader, attacked Manwar with sharp weapons at a tea stall. They also cut the tendons of his both legs.

Local people sent Litan to the Jessore Sadar Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Nawab Shaheen is wanted by the local police in a number of cases.

Dutch team

From Page 1 Col 8

two components of the about 500 million dollar FAP, namely FAP 25 and FAP 20.

The FAP 25 aims at developing a flood model that involves a two-lakh-guilder Dutch involvement and the FAP 20 aims at testing water control and management systems so that a safe environment can be created for agriculture, fish-crops and integrate rural development. This part involves and 8.13 million guilders Dutch contribution.

The study of the IOV FAP evaluation team is a response to the extensive criticisms of the FAP by Bangladeshi advisory bodies, various scientific and newspaper reports, NGO reports and opinions expressed by donors.

The aim of the study is to examine whether the criticisms of the FAP necessitate a change in the Dutch standpoint.

The Dutch decision to support FAP 20 and FAP 25 is connected with expectations concerning the objectives of the FAP programme as a whole.

The team will interview Bangladesh authorities involved in implementing the FAP, Bangladesh academics, NGO representatives, representatives of donors involved in FAP, and experts working on other projects in Bangladesh. Discussions with the World Bank will also be held.

The final report of the team will be completed by March 1, 1993.

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Plan to fix up land ceiling in urban area

The government is planning to fix up ceiling of land in the urban area, State Minister for Land M. Kabir Hossain said in Dhaka yesterday, reports BSS.

He said the government had fixed up ceiling of land in the rural area and now determination of land ceiling in the urban area was being discussed at the Parliamentary Standing Committee for Land Ministry.

The State Minister said the government was evolving systems for distribution of khas and non-arable land.