

**Titas fails to keep records**

**Customers harassed despite paying bills**

Star Report

Inability by the Titas Gas authorities to keep current records of paid bills is leading to the harassment of the customers in the city.

In a recent drive to realise arrears bills, the Titas Gas authorities have been sending out their vigilance teams to disconnect gas lines of the defaulters. However, many of the "defaulters" were found to have paid their dues, but their payments were not recorded in the gas authorities' books.

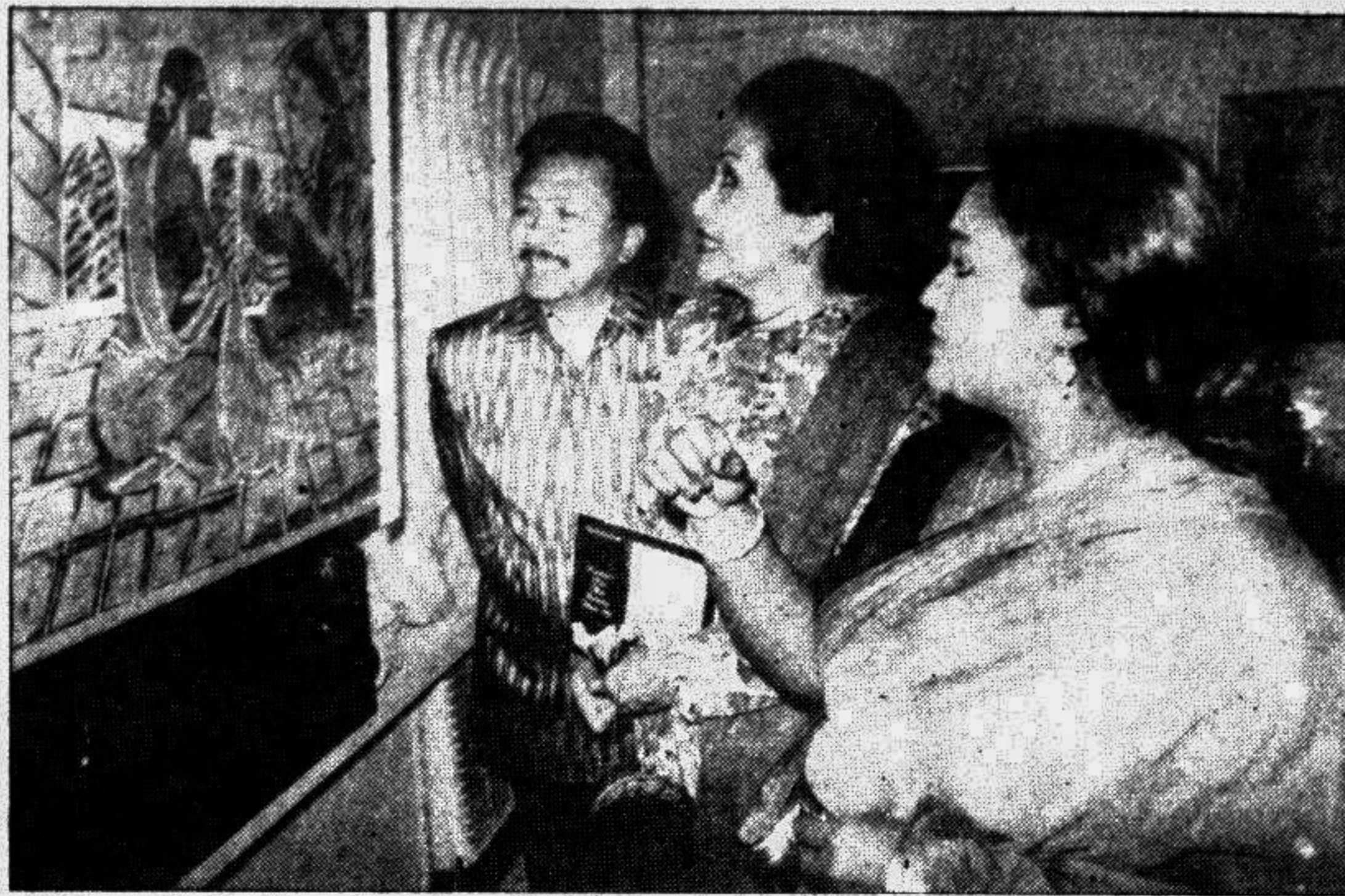
Moreover, the disconnection teams arrive at the customers' houses during the office hours when the house owners stay at work. When the inmates fail to show their bill books, the teams threaten to disconnect gas lines.

Many customers say that if the Titas Gas authorities had served them a notice before hand, they could avoid the harassment by contacting the authorities.

When contacted, Titas authorities said that according to the contract between the customers and the Titas Company, the latter was not bound to serve any notice for non-payment of bills.

However, they admitted that they could not keep track of all the paid bills in time which resulted in charging the innocent customers. They also said that the company was now disconnecting lines for non-payment of bills for more than 90 days.

At present, different public and private customers owe about Taka 211 crore to the Titas Gas Company. Of them Power Development Board (PDB) owes Taka 85 crore, the fertilizer factories owe Taka 26 crore, other industries Taka 40 crore, different commercial units Taka 15 crore and the domestic customers owe Taka 45 crore.



Madame Hestia Soemakno, the wife of Indonesian Ambassador in Bangladesh is flanked by the Ambassador and painter Kamrun Nahar at La Galerie in city yesterday. — Star photo

**Kamrun's painting show begins**

By Staff Correspondent

A week-long exhibition of paintings of Kamrun Nahar began in the city yesterday.

Hestia Soemakno, wife of Indonesian Ambassador in Bangladesh, inaugurated the show at the la Galerie praising the artist's works as "a wonderful expression of Bangladesh life."

"Her works have enriched our common heritage. She has given Oriental paintings a Bangladesh look," said Madame Soemakno, herself a painter.

"She has a lovely sense of colour and a superb understanding of lines. She looks at nature, in all its majesty and beauty, with the eyes of a Bengali, without the influence of the West as such. Yet when it comes to technique, she leans towards cosmopolitan trends, but with caution and care," wrote S M Ali, the Editor of The Daily Star, in his greetings.

A total of 21 water colour works and 16 batiks are on display at the painter's first solo initiative.

Of the water colour paintings, three are abstract while the rest realistic.

Speaking about her works, Kamrun said "I keep waiting and looking forward to the most perfect work of mine."

These paintings are just witnesses to my continued search," said Kamrun, a graduate from the Institute of Fine Arts.

Art critics who converged on the inaugural ceremony said that in a rare juxtaposition Kamrun Nahar had retained the Oriental norm and form in the context of Bangladesh.

Her works contained more figure that normally found in batiks, they said.

The exhibition is open to the public from 9 am to 8 pm everyday.

**Byelection: Mohsin**

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Other candidates including Kamal Ahmed Majumder of the AL and Belal Ahmed of Jatiya Party in the by-election.

The function was also attended, among others, by the CEC Justice Mohammad Rouf, Election Commissioner Justice Mesbahuddin Hossain, Assistant Returning Officer Abu Solaiman Chowdhury, Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia, City Mayor Mirza Abbas, Salahuddin, Ahmed MP and Amanullah Aman MP of the BNP and KM Jahangir MP, Matia Chowdhury MP and Mirza Azam MP of AL.

The BNP candidate Mohsin was also present but the AL's Kamal Majumder was not.

The CEC Justice Rouf in his brief speech, delivered after the announcement of results, highly appreciated the responsible and disciplined conduct of all especially the politicians during the recounting. "It would remain a glittering example for the nation," he said.

Justice Chowdhury further said, "the well-disciplined role of the political leadership would help grow people's confidence in the electoral system and put democracy on firm footing."

There might have been differences of opinion among the political parties, but they must work to gain people's confidence by demonstrating their responsible role, he said.

The CEC also thanked journalists, members of law enforcing agencies for their cooperation in this connection.

According to yesterday's official results, after the scrutiny, 936 among the earlier cancelled 1626 ballots were found valid. Now the number of cancelled votes stands at 690.

With the addition of invalid-turned-valid ballots, the number of votes polled by Mohsin of BNP is now 80,276, Kamal Majumder of AL 77,651, by Belal Ahmed of JP 7,149.

The percentage of votes cast was 60.58.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission is a gazette notification issued yesterday declaring Syed Mohammad Mohsin of BNP officially elected in the Mirpur by-election, held on February 3. The parliament seat fell vacant after Harunur Rashid Mollah of the ruling party died.

**Shantibahini demand**

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seats in the national assembly.

It also demands "to place all lands, hills, area of Kaptai lake and all forests including reserve forests, except the area of Kaptai Hydro-Electric Power Station project, the area of Betnuba satellite station, state-owned industrial areas and the lands acquired in the interest of the state, at their disposal and control of the Council."

It further demands measures to "cancel ownership of those land and hills occupied in any manner or purchased by the residents... and transfer those to the real owners or to the council" and also wants the cancellation of lease and settlements of lands for rubber plantations, forestry of any other such purpose.

Finally, the second point demands "to place the camps of the army and paramilitary forces and the areas occupied by the cantonments under the control and disposal of the Council."

The third point demands the withdrawal of "outsiders" who "illegally" entered the region since August 17, 1947 and the rehabilitation and "honourable" return of those who were forced to go to India since 1960.

The fourth point demands

appropriate measures to rehabilitate all members of PCJSS, withdrawal of cases against them, preservation of quotas in the civil and defence services and educational institutions, to establish a bank with government grants and also to establish a radio station in the region.

The fifth point demands the creation of a "congenial atmosphere for the peaceful political solution of Chittagong Hill Tracts."

It goes on to demand the "unconditional" release of all under trial and convicted Jamma people, "immediate demilitarisation" of the civil administration, to stop "infiltration" of people from other areas of Bangladesh and the withdrawal of army and paramilitary camps, "except BDR camps, and cantonments from the region."

Consisting of about 5,500 sq. miles, about one-tenth of the total land area of Bangladesh, the CHT region has a population of about 14 lakh people. Of which, nearly 50 per cent are tribals belonging to 13-odd tribes while the rest are plainlanders who have been settling in the region since the pre-partition British rule period. The largest of the tribes, the Chakmas, number a little over two lakhs.

**Gray's Inn honours Shahabuddin**

By Staff Correspondent

Former Acting President Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed has been elected an honorary Master of the Bench of the Honourable Society of Gray's Inn, London, a Supreme Court press release said Tuesday.

He was elected master at a meeting of the governing body of the Inn held on January 14, the press release said adding that the Inn Treasurer John Vinelott conveyed the message to the Bangladesh Chief Justice recently.

The press release said that it was one of the customs of the Inn "to honour persons for their distinguished work in the law and other fields" by electing them as honorary benchers, traditionally known as "Master of the Bench."

**I gets life term for killing maid servant**

Showkat Iqbal (50), owner of Eskaton Community Center, was sentenced to life imprisonment for killing his maid servant, reports UNB.

The court also fined him to pay Tk 10,000 or in default to suffer another one month rigorous imprisonment.

Another co-accused Dr. Al Azam (35), an MBBS doctor, was also sentenced to suffer 2 years RI for giving false death certificate for the murdered maid servant. He was also fined to pay Tk 5,000 or in default to suffer a month of RI.

According to the prosecution, on March 14, 1991, accused Showkat Iqbal of 90, Eskaton Road killed his maid servant Renu (22) by strangulating her in the bathroom.

He then took a false death certificate about the cause of death of the victim and buried the body in Azimpur graveyard secretly.

Prosecution examined 19 witnesses during the trial of the case and after hearing both sides, additional session judge Abdul Gaffar found the accused guilty and convicted them.

**JS debate**

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The opposition MPs while discussing the bills last night welcomed the government move for direct election to the post of Mayors but were critical about the provision of abolishing the post of Deputy Mayors.

BSS adds: Introduced by the LGRD Minister, Abdus Salam Talukder the bills on February 10 were: The Chittagong City Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 1993, The Dhaka City Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 1993, The Khulna City Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 1993 and the Rajshahi City Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 1993.

Participating in the debate opposition members described the bills as not in conformity with the constitutional provision of laying the affairs of the government and local government in the hands of people's representatives.

They said that though the bill envisaged the scope for elected Mayor but the elected office of Mayor was left to the mercy of the government as he or she could be removed by administrative order.

Lady member belonging to Awami League Matiya Chowdhury opposed the provision of reserved seats for women in corporations

**2 cloth-merchants housewife robbed of Tk 3.27 lakh**

By DMCH Correspondent

Two cloth-merchants and a housewife were robbed of Taka 3.27 lakh in separate incidents at Nawabpur and Foider Street in the city Tuesday morning.

One of the cloth-merchants, Shabbir Ahmed Chaudhury was stabbed and was treated at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

While two brothers Shabbir Ahmed Chaudhury and Kabir Ahmed Chaudhury, both cloth-merchants, were going to Islampur by a rickshaw, they were waylaid by muggers who stabbed Shabbir and snatched Taka 2,26,500 in cash and Taka 90,000 in Bank Demand Draft (DD) at Nawabpur at around 7 am yesterday.

Both the brothers came to Dhaka yesterday morning from Maulvibazar, Sylhet to buy cloth, they said.

In another incident, a housewife Shahana Begum was robbed of Taka 11,000 in cash at Foider Street at around 8:30 am yesterday while she was returning to her Joginagar residence in a rickshaw.

Two muggers riding on an auto-rickshaw stopped her and snatched the cash at gun-point, police said.

**Programmes to observe Shaheed Day**

The government yesterday announced elaborate programmes for observing in a befitting manner the Shaheed Day in commemoration of language martyrs, reports UNB.

The day is a public holiday.

The national flag will fly half-mast atop all government, non-government buildings and educational institutions.

Milad-mahfil and Quran Khwam will be held in all mosques of the country for peace on the martyrs departed souls.

Radio and television will put up special programmes and newspapers will bring out special supplements on the day, great Ekushy February.

Some important road-islands in the city will be decorated with festoons inscribed with Bangla alphabets. A musical soiree will be staged at Ramna Batamool where artists from various cultural groups will render patriotic songs.

Foreign missions in Dhaka will place floral wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar. Fateha will also be offered at Azimpur graveyard for pace of the departed souls.

The day will also be observed with due solemnity by Bangladesh missions abroad.

Similar programmes will be arranged at district and thana levels to mark the day.

**Khaleda reviews Ansar parade**

SHIAFIPUR (Gazipur), Feb 16: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today said Ansar and VDP (Village Defence Party) would have to play a bold role in maintaining peace and stability in national life to make the present development drive a success, reports UNB.

Peace, discipline and stability are prerequisites for development. As a well-disciplined workforce, you have to play a strong role in this regard, she told the 16th National Rally of Ansar and VDP at the Ansar Academy this morning.

On arrival at the parade ground of the academy in a ceremonial motorcade, the Prime Minister was received by Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury and Director General of Ansar and VDP Maj Gen Syed Badruzzaman.

Begum Zia reviewed the parade and took salute of contingents which also included woman members of the force.

The women of Ansar and VDP also put up a colourful Kaleidoscopic display with different development slogans and inspirational pictures of the Prime Minister and Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman.

**Gen Osmany**

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through integration of freedom and sovereignty and keeping the flag of democracy high."

Jatiya Janata Party, founded by Gen Osmany observed the day through hoisting party flag at half mast and black flag at its offices all over the country and through holding milad mahfil, destitute feeding and discussion on the life and activities of the valiant freedom fighter.

"Bangabir Osmany Samajseba O Gabeshana Parishad" observed the day through placing wreath at the mazar of late Gen Osmany at Sylhet. The parishad also organised milad mahfil and offering of special manajat at Baitul Mokarram Mosque and a memorial meeting.

"Bangabir Osmany Smriti Parishad" organised a seminar on "Liberation War, parliamentary democracy and Osmany" at the auditorium of Jatiya Press Club in observance of the day.

Deputy Leader of Opposition in the Parliament Abdus Samad Azad, Secretary General of Workers Party Rashed Khan Menon MP, former Chief Justice Kemaluddin Hussain, Shahjahan Siraj MP, Maj. Gen (Brig) Kazi Gholam Dastagir, (Brig) Retd) Firoz Salahuddin and Parishad leaders took part in the seminar.

Abdus Samad Azad recalled the glorious role played by Gen. Osmany in the War of Liberation of the country and said his life was the best example of sacrifices made by an individual for the nation.

Rashed Khan Menon recalled the stand taken by late Gen. Osmany when he resigned from parliament in protest against switching over to one-party rule from parliamentary system.

Describing Gen Osmany as a very distinguished soldier, Maj. Gen. Dastagir said Osmany had never compromised with the interest of the nation and its people.

Kemaluddin Hussain said an upright and conscientious person like Gen. Osmany was very rare in our country. He upheld the democratic values and contributed to framing the country's Constitution in 1972, Mr Hussain said.

**The Midnight File**

**Russia to support India on Kashmir issue**

NEW DELHI, Feb 16: Russia today assured support to India as it raised the possibility of Pakistan packing up the Kashmir issue at the United Nations. At the Foreign Secretary-level meeting held here as a follow-up to the Russian president, Boris Yeltsin's recent visit to India, it was decided that the delegations of the two countries at the UN and other international fora would function in consultation with each other, reports PTI.

**Victoria college closed as JCD, BCL clash**

COMILLA, Feb 16: Comilla Victoria Government College was closed today (Tuesday) for four days till February 20 after an armed clash between activists of Chhatra League and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal left 7 students injured. The college authorities closed the campus to avert further untoward incident, reports UNB.

**Mahathir holds talks with Sharif**

ISLAMABAD, Feb 16: Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad and Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif held formal talks Monday focusing on economic cooperation between their two countries, reports AFP.

Mahathir, who arrived Sunday for a four-day visit, agreed with Sharif on "broad principles" for tackling an imbalance in bilateral trade, an official statement said.

Figures for 1991 showed a Pakistani trade deficit of 337 million dollars with Malaysia. Palm oil accounted for over 90 per cent on Malaysia's exports to this country.

Concrete measures to tackle the imbalance will be discussed by relevant ministers on Tuesday, the statement said, adding that officials would also discuss sending more Pakistani expatriate workers to Malaysia.

The two leaders also reviewed international and regional issues.

**Section 144 in Chandpur**

CHANDPUR, Feb 16: The district administration today imposed section 144 on the town as well as the playground of Hasan Ali High School where Chhatra-Dal Nirmul Committee was to hold a public meeting, reports UNB.

The prohibition came when the district unit of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal suddenly called for a protest meeting and gaibana janaza at the school ground where the Nirmul Committee meeting at 3 pm was scheduled earlier.

The central leaders of Nirmul Committee at a press conference held at the Dak Bungalow later in the evening condemned the authorities' step which they said was to foil their meeting.

**Hartal observed in Rangpur**

From Our Correspondent

RANGPUR, Feb 16: A dawn-to-dusk hartal was observed here on Tuesday demanding the immediate release of Jatiya Party leaders including the newly elected chairman of the local pourashava, Sharfuddin Ahmed Jhanui.

The hartal was called by the Jatiya Party as the Court rejected the bail petition of the newly elected chairman.

A case was filed against on October 10 last year in connection with the terrorist activities near Shapla Chattar, Dhaka.

Since then, Sharfuddin was absconding and he has been elected chairman in absentia.

**Non-tourist**

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contrary to the rules.

The amendment also added that a non-tourist passenger from the SAARC countries and from some South-East Asian countries— Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and Myanmar can bring goods worth about Taka 3000 and from the other countries goods worth about Taka 10,000 without any duty. But a passenger is not allowed to bring one item of more than six pieces, the recent amendment included.

A customs source said that the Bangladesh government allow 200 tolas of gold ornaments for a non-tourist passenger without any duty but it does not allow any silver ornament.

It was proposed by the customs authority to allow silver ornaments but it was not included in the recent amendment, said the source.

**Police fire**

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Witnesses said that the workers uprooted the rail-tracks and barricaded the roads disrupting communications for several hours.

Police charged batons and lobbed teargas shells to disperse the agitated workers.

Condition of one of Monday's injured Adamjee workers, deteriorated at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Out Staff Correspondent from Chittagong said that the communications remained disrupted for the day because of road and rail track barricade by the jute and textile workers.

Police were deployed in the troubled industrial region but they did not take any action to remove the barricade, witnesses said.

Our Narayanganj correspondent reported that there was no barricade near the Adamjee Jute Mills on the Dhaka-Narayanganj and Dhaka-Chittagong road on the second day (Tuesday) but that the workers stayed away from duties protesting Monday's police action.

More than 40 workers were injured, six seriously on the first day's clashes with police.

Meanwhile, the Action Committee thanked the workers for making the 48-hour programme as success and urged them to observe agitation day Wednesday to protest the 'police atrocities' on workers.

**Promote libraries**

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He also stressed the need for creating the habit of reading among the children to build them up as good citizen of the country.

Abdun Noor said psychological development of the people was the precondition to national development, which could be achieved only through educating the people in the real sense.

Libraries of the country could play a vital role in this regard, he said, adding that the government would have to take initiative to set up libraries in district and thana levels as it was not possible solely for the people to initiate these.

The discussion was followed by a musical programme. Farida Parvin, Dil Afroz Reba, Kiron Chandra Ray, Shahnaq Bel, Mohin Shah and Mina Barua rendered Lalan songs at the function.

As part of the Ekushy programme organised by the Sammitto Sangskritik Jote, Aranya Natya Goshthi staged a street drama titled 'Ghumao Manush' at the Central Shaheed Minar premises.

Today's Bangla Academy programme: Discussion on 'Bangladesh Sahitya: Ranya O Bango Rachana'. Prof Abdur Rashid, Prof Abul Quasem Chowdhury, Prof Mamtauzzdin Ahmed and Khandaker Ali Ashraf will take part in the discussion while Prof Sirajul Islam Chowdhury will preside. The discussion will be followed by a dance-drama.

Bangabandhu Gobeshana Kendra has planned to organise a discussion meeting on 'Language Movement and Bangabandhu' on February 22 at the Bangabandhu Bhavan on the occasion of Amar Ekushy.

Awami League Chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina will attend the function as chief guest while Prof. Kabir Chowdhury, Advocate Gazul Huq, Santosh Gupta and MR Akhtar Mukul will take part in the discussion. Poet Sofia Kamal will preside over the function and Mohiuddin Ahmed MP will present the keynote paper.

Bangladesh Nagarik Adhikar Parishad will organise a discussion meeting on 'Language Movement and the Present

SAARC activities

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on a three-day visit, told The Daily Star.

The Standing Committee is comprised of the Foreign Secretaries and the Council of Ministers is made up of Foreign Ministers.

The summit, scheduled for December 12-13, was postponed December 8 as the top diplomats were holding their meeting, but the diplomats and the ministers went ahead with their sessions to set the stage for the summit on a rescheduled date.

The summit was rescheduled for January 13-14, but had to be put off again only three days ago.

On both occasions, Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao expressed his inability to attend, leading to the postponements.

Asked about the possible new dates, the SAARC chief executive said, "I will not be able to comment on that because the issue entirely rests with the current chairman President Premadasa."

Zaki was earlier quoted by an Indian news agency as saying that the summit would be held sometime in March.

Bangladesh has said that it will not be able to host the summit until after March 26, the country's Independence and National Day. Dhaka does not want to hold the event during the month of Ramadan that ends a few days before the National Day.

The SAARC official will call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today before heading for Karachi on similar mission. He has already visited India, Sri Lank, Maldives and held talks with Nepalese officials. He will also visit the SAARC Agricultural Information Centre in the city today.

Officials said that his meeting with Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman yesterday dealt with matters like the implementation of the programmes in the calendar of activities under the Integrated Programme of Activities (IPA) approved by the Standing Committee and the Council of Ministers. The IPA covers 13 areas of cooperation.

They also discussed the issues such as SAPTA, SADF and the report of the Poverty Alleviation Committee which are to be looked into by the heads of government themselves at the summit.

**BAU closed a week ahead of Ramadan vacation**

MYMENSINGH, Feb 16: Bangladesh Agricultural University was declared closed today (Tuesday), a week ahead of the scheduled Ramadan vacation, amidst tension caused by continued feud between two factions of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, reports UNB.

The BAU authorities asked students to vacate their dormitories by 4 pm tomorrow (Wednesday).

Campus sources said the Syndicate took the decision at an emergency meeting held on Monday with Vice-Chancellor Prof Ashraf Ali in the chair. The authorities announced the decision today.

Two rival groups of JCD — one led by Chanchal and another by Kamal—frequently clashed with each other since February 1.

A supporter of the Chanchal group was killed on February 1 in a clash between the rival groups.

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