

Ogata due next month Dhaka-Yangon talks by month end

COX'S BAZAR, Apr 19: The next official level talks between Bangladesh and Myanmar are likely to be held by the end of the current month at Mongdow of Arakan.

An official source told BSS here today that Bangladesh may get assent from Myanmar government in next two or three days regarding holding of the 24th round of talks.

The last talks between two sides was held on January 28 at Cox's Bazar, since then, the regular meeting between two governments had been postponed because of Myanmar government's business in bringing about some amendments to the constitution of that country, the source said.

The repatriation of the Rohingya refugees also remained suspended from April 7.

UNB adds: Sadako Ogata, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, is expected to visit Bangladesh in the middle of next month to

review the Rohingya refugee problems.

She will be accompanied by Jamshed Anwar, director for the Asian region at the Geneva-based UN relief agency, informed sources here said.

During her stay here, Ogata will hold talks with Bangladesh officials on various aspects of the refugee problems, including their repatriation.

Out of a total 1,65,000 Myanmar Muslims who fled Arakan and took refuge in south-eastern region of Bangladesh, more than 22,000 have so far voluntarily returned to their homes under bilateral agreement between Dhaka and Yangon signed in April last year.

The UNHCR has been the major UN agency helping Bangladesh look after the Rohingya refugees. It has so far provided Bangladesh with US dollar 14 million in relief to help tackle the problems of the Myanmar Muslims.

Police pick up 9 as C&F agents continue strike

By Staff Correspondent

Police Monday evening rounded up nine leaders of clearing and forwarding agents from the Zia International Airport area in connection with their indefinite strike.

The Association of Bangladesh Clearing and Forwarding Agents called an indefinite strike on Saturday in protest against the sealing off their office at the Zia International Airport by the Civil Aviation Authorities on Friday.

All the nine persons were detained at the Dhaka Cantonment Police Station, said police without giving details.

The duty officer said that the nine persons were picked up — they were not arrested. Decision regarding these persons is yet to be taken, he said.

Meanwhile, the clearing and forwarding agents observed their strike for the third consecutive day yesterday. Cargo shipment by different airlines were disrupted due to strike, a source said.

Sanjay Dutt arrested for keeping arms

BOMBAY, Apr 19: Indian movie star Sanjay Dutt, the heart-throb of millions, was arrested Monday for illegal possession of an AK-56 assault rifle, he allegedly received from suspects in last month's Bombay blasts, police said, reports AFP.

Dutt, son of ruling Congress (I) Party MP Sunil Dutt, was arrested under the non-bailable Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act hours after he was picked up at the airport on return from a location shoot in Mauritius.

His arrest was announced by Sharad Pawar, Chief Minister of the Maharashtra state government which administers Bombay, in the provincial legislature.

Temporary haji camp being set up at Uttara

A temporary Haji Camp for the current year is being set up at Uttara Model Town, (Sector-6) at a cost of Taka one crore 4 lakh under the supervision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, reports BSS.

State Minister for Religious Affairs Prof M A Mannan yesterday held a high level meeting with the officials of different concerned departments and organisations at Uttara to assess the progress of Haji Camp. The Haji Camp is expected to be completed within next Monday, to accommodate the hajis for flight to Jeddah scheduled to start from May 1.

Separate accommodation for male and female hajis are being made. Mosque, bath and toilet facilities, post office, canteen, medicare, banking, fire service, bimam counter and telephone services would be ensured, the handout added.

The state minister went round different under construction units of the Haji Camp and urged all concerned to complete the work within the stipulated time. Among others, Secretary, Ministry of Religious Affairs Abdul Awal was present on the occasion.

3 Rohingyas held for attempt on life of doctor

COX'S BAZAR, Apr 19: Police today arrested three Rohingyas from Marcha bus stand in Kukkha thana when they allegedly made an attempt on the life of a local doctor, reports UNB.

Police said Imam Hossain (28), Nurul Islam (45) and Sabir Ahmed (40) were arrested when they wielded dagger at the doctor, Rakhal Chandra Sarker, at the bus stand this morning.

They were sent to Cox's Bazar jail.

Chinese team due today to study livestock farming

A four-member Chinese delegation will arrive here today to study livestock farming in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

The visit is taking place under the agreement between China and Bangladesh for Scientific and Technical Cooperation and under the programme 1992 protocol, officials said yesterday.

Ganges project

ence at Hotel Purbani in the city, Mushtaque, a former President, also demanded internationalisation of the Farakka issue by raising it at various international forums including the United Nations, with a view to creating pressure on India.

The press conference was organised to present the NDA's view of the Farakka crisis following the visit of a delegation of the Alliance to the Harding Bridge Sunday.

Other NDA leaders including Col. (ret'd) Khandakar Abdur Rashid, Anwar Zahid, A S M Solaiman, Col. (ret'd) Shahriar Rashid Khan, Ataur Haque Khan, Advocate Shafigur Rahman and Hazrat Ali Sikdar were also present.

Khandakar Mushtaque in a written speech, read out by Col. Rashid (Ret'd), further demanded that the government pressurise India into agreeing to a tripartite move by Bangladesh-India-Nepal for an increased flow of the Ganges through Farakka, and the other common rivers.

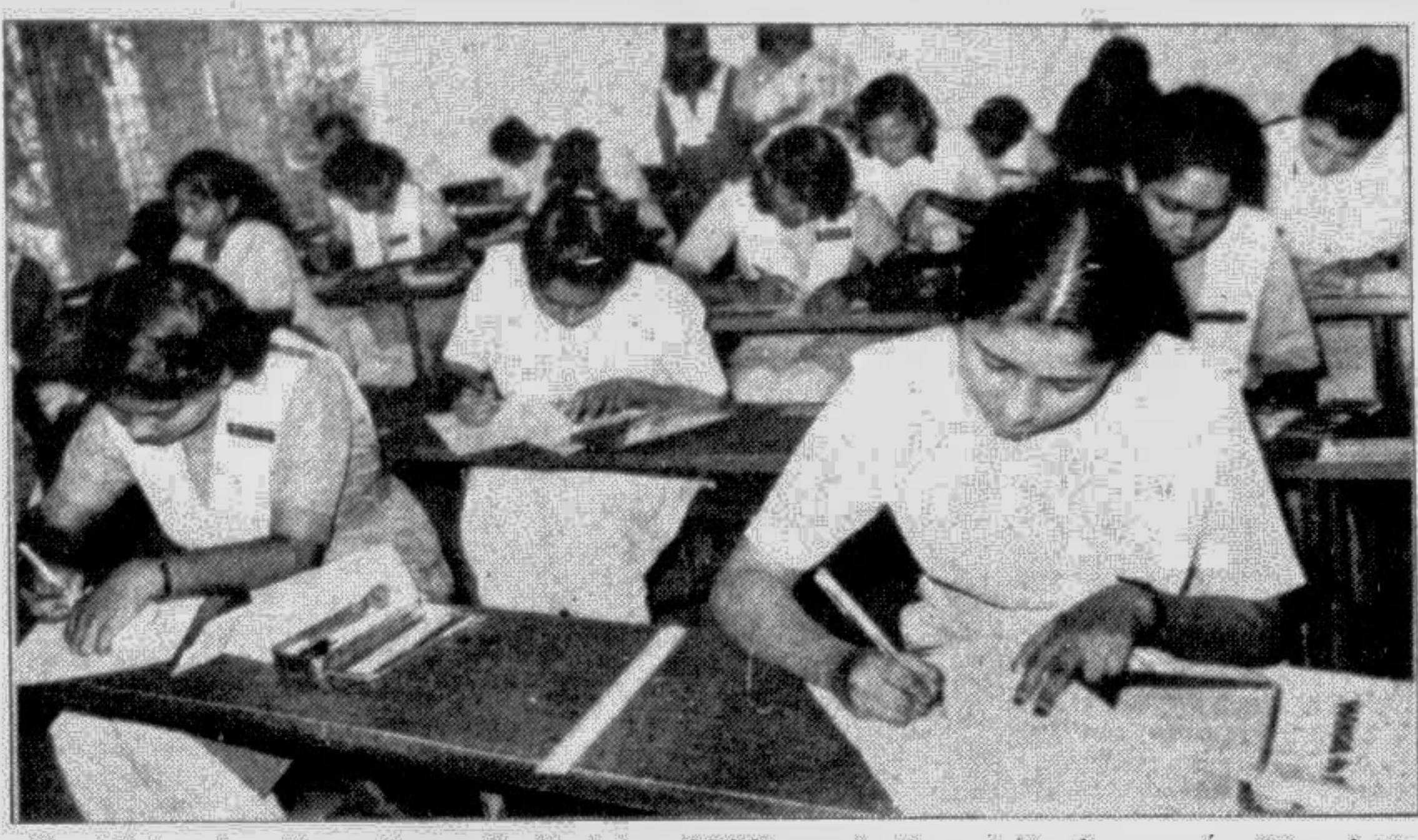
He also called on the government to lodge a case in the International Court of Justice demanding compensation for the financial losses caused to Bangladesh by the construction of Farakka Barrage.

The NDA leader's speech elaborated on the consequences of India's controlling waters according to its necessities and whims and the newsmen were told that copies of the speech would be sent to all foreign missions in the country.

Referring to the just concluded Seventh SAARC Summit, the NDA Chairman commented that the Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao had not shown any positive indication towards changing his country's attitude on the Farakka issue during the Summit.

Moreover, he added, the inept leadership of the Bangladesh government had turned the situation grave. "We strongly condemn the 'kitchen diplomacy' of the government," he remarked.

Replying to a query, Anwar Zahid said that they would motivate the people to rise against the government's ineffective steps in resolving the Farakka crisis.



Candidates at a city centre on the first day of SSC examinations yesterday. —Star photo

Indemnity Act a justified one, says Mushtaque

By Nazmul Ashraf

Former President of the Republic Khandakar Mushtaque Ahmed, who promulgated the controversial Indemnity Ordinance barring the trial of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's killers, still deems his act a justified one.

"I have done it and done it correctly," a confident Mushtaque said while talking to The Daily Star, yesterday morning.

Mushtaque's talks over a cup of tea followed his press conference at Hotel Purbani. Mushtaque, who served Sheikh Mujib's government as a cabinet minister and took over the country's Presidency after the August '75 military coup, emphatically expressed his respect for Mujib's leadership.

"Do you still recognise Mujib's leadership?" being asked the question, he sharply reacted, "Why not? Should I submit myself to your leadership?"

"Mushtaque, who ruled the country for only 83 days convened the press conference to express his views on the Farakka Barrage issue and its grave consequences for Bangladesh.

His otherwise friendly demeanour became one of irritation and he lost his temper whenever questions regarding his brief regime were asked.

Asked whether he supported the Khaleda government, Mushtaque had a quip, "question does not arise to support it when it tells lies."

Responding to the question if he was afraid of speaking against the present government, he answered smilingly, "Yes, I do have fears. None can dare say that he or she is not afraid. But I was never afraid of speaking out on any national issue."

Why have you chosen only the Farakka issue while the nation is facing many other problems?

I do admit there are many other pressing problems. But I think, the Farakka issue is far more important than any other issue.

The NDA Chairman blamed all the post-Liberation governments for failing to resolve the Farakka crisis, quoting this statement in his written speech, the journalists asked him what he did, when in power.

The ex-President proudly replied, "Despite my brief rule, I sent late Justice S M Murshed to participate in an international conference on water resources."

According to Mushtaque, who served Mujib's cabinet as the Minister for Flood Control and Water Resources, the Farakka problem would not go unless our dependence on India went. Rather, we need to create a world opinion in our favour and motivate and persuade our people against the injustice being done to us by India, he remarked, when his opinion was sought on the matter.

Mizan, Milon chargesheeted

Jatiya Party Acting Chairman and former Prime Minister Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury and another JP leader were yesterday chargesheeted in a criminal case for carrying objectionable "papers" in briefcase while leaving for Saudi Arabia, reports UNB.

The former ruling party's International Affairs Secretary, Nurul Islam Milon, has already been in jail since he was placed under detention after his arrest from the Zia International Airport on February 10.

Mizan Chowdhury was granted bail in the case, in which the JP leaders were accused of carrying their jailed party chief Ershad's letter and other papers while leaving for Saudi Arabia.

Assistant Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police Ruhul Amin filed the chargesheet with the CMM Court.

SSC exams begin

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Under Rajshahi Board the highest number of examinees, 70, were expelled from Dinajpur district, while the number of expulsions were, 27 from Rangpur, 20 from Bogra, 24 from Sirajganj, 18 from Kurigram, 8 from Lalmonirhat, 7 from Panchagarh, 5 from Naogaon, 4 from Chapal Nawabganj, 2 each from Natore and Nilphamari and 1 from Pabna.

Of the total students expelled under Comilla Board, 142 were expelled from Comilla, 25 from Cox's Bazar, 11 from Sylhet, 10 from Khagrachhari, 7 from Moulvibazar, 4 from Habiganj and 2 from Rangamati districts.

Under Jessore Board, 4 students were expelled from Jhalokathi, 3 each from Chuadanga, Narail and Jessore and one each from Bhola and Barguna districts.

Our Rajbari Correspondent adds, two persons were arrested from Baliakandi centre of the district for helping the examinees to adopt unfair means. A series of chase and counter-chase between police and three unscrupulous people also took place in the centre.

Examinations were held peacefully elsewhere of the district. Our correspondents from Mymensingh and Sylhet also reported holding of peaceful examinations in the districts.

In Dhaka city examinations were held peacefully at almost all the centres. No untoward incident was reported from any centre excepting for an announcement by the authorities of Willes Little Flower School prior to the examinations that created tension among the examinees and their guardians.

According to witnesses, the School authorities announced over loudspeakers that the examinees would have to show registration cards along with their admit cards to the invigilators in the examination halls.

As most of the examinees did not bring their registration cards with them because they were not supposed to, they and their guardians became agitated which created some confusions, the witnesses said and added that the matter was, however, settled soon after the Headmaster's notice was drawn to it.

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Sharif takes to court

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Their presence was seen as demonstrating the powerful Pakistani military's support of the move taken by the President, who accused Sharif of engaging in financial mismanagement and nepotism in his 29 months in office.

An angry Sharif, addressing the crowds in Rawalpindi, said he would not rest until the present unjust system which gave the President powers to oust him, was changed.

"We are up against the enemies of Pakistan, Sharif said, charging that his dismissal had angered the entire nation."

Sharif asked the High Court earlier on Monday to block dissolution of the National Assembly (lower house).

The petition sought that the president's order be suspended. The president dissolved the House and set general elections for July 14.

"We will win the election, Sharif said. We have the support of the whole nation..."

He said he would launch street protests in his power-base in the most populous province of Punjab from Wednesday, starting with a crowd-pulling train journey from near Islamabad to the provincial capital of Lahore.

He attacked opposition leader and former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, whose last minute declaration of support for her former foe, the President, on Sunday gave Ishaq Khan the political clout to dump his former protegee.

Customs target

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2340 crore.

Sources at the National Board of Revenue also attributed the shortfall to the reduction of tariff rates in the current budget.

They indicated that NBR would be cautious in setting earning target from customs head in the coming budget when duty rates might further be lowered. Sources said maximum duty rate would be fixed at 75 per cent in the ensuing 1993-94 budget, excepting few items.

Authorities are also considering raising supplementary duty to make up the revenue loss from the customs head.

Although revenue fell in the customs source, overall earning during the period surpassed the target by Tk 150 crore, resulting from satisfactory collection of VAT (Value Added Tax) and excise duty.

Total collection stood at Tk 5900 crore against the target of Tk 5750 crore.

VAT collection amounted to Tk 1815 crore when target from the head was set at Tk 1670 crore. Collection of excise duty was Tk 280 crore against the targeted Tk 120 crore.

Income tax fetched Tk 980 crore against the target of Tk 825 crore for the period.

BJC to be shut down by June

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Jute Corporation will be closed down for good by June this year and all employees excluding 200 will be released from their services.

Jute Minister Brig (Ret'd) A S M Hannan Shah told this at a press briefing at his residence Monday.

Moreover, 1100 more workers of Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) will be sent into voluntary retirement by the end of this fiscal year pushing the total number of retired workers to 20000, the Jute Minister said.

Already, 17900 workers and employees have been sent into voluntary retirement.

Hannan Shah said out of total 2200 workers of BJC, 600 have already been released from their services. He said only 200 officials will stay to look after the accounts and other related matters.

The government is now reassessing the property of BJC and these will be auctioned off excluding those the government deems necessary to retain.

One stabbed to death in city

By Staff Correspondent

A young man Yusuf Mia (25), was stabbed to death at Beharamdeuri in the city late Sunday night.

Family members said that Yusuf was missing since some youths came to see him at the house and he went out with them at around 11:00 pm Sunday.

"As Yusuf did not return home Sunday night, we looked for him on the following morning and found his dead body at a graveyard near the house at 15/2, Beharamdeuri," they said.

Witnesses said that several marks of stabbing were found on the body of Yusuf. However, the body of Yusuf was sent to Sir Salimullah Medical College Mitford Hospital for autopsy.

Railway sector

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the annual loss of the sector was Tk 105.98 crore in fiscal 1991-92 as compared to Tk 150.13 crore in 1989-90.

Communications Minister Col (ret'd) Ali Ahmed, Finance Minister Saifur Rahman and concerned senior officials were present at the meeting held at the International Conference Centre in the evening.

The meeting reviewed the progress of 15 Railway projects now under implementation under the Annual Development Programme for FY 1992-93. The projects, 14 of which are foreign-funded, involves a total cost of Tk 178 crore with local component of Tk 68 crore.

Officials told the meeting that about Taka 40 crore will be saved annually as a result of the Voluntary Retirement Scheme taken by Bangladesh Railways.

More than 9,000 applications have so far been received for voluntary retirement, of which 5,000 have been cleared. Voluntary retirement of the 5,000 people will cost the railway division about Taka one crore.

The meeting was informed that successful implementation of the government programmes will help the railway sector save Tk 520 crore.

Mentioning different steps taken to improve the train services, it was said that importance had been attached to carrying long-distance passengers and goods.

As part of loss reducing programme, committees with local people have been formed and officials posted in different stations to check ticketless travelling. All complementary passes have also been withdrawn.

RUTA declares VC 'unwanted'

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Apr 19: Rajshahi University Teachers' Association (RUTA) today declared Professor Anisur Rahman, Vice-Chancellor of the University, as an 'unwanted' person for his alleged role in trying to divide the teachers community.

RUTA took this decision at a general meeting protesting the removal of Professor Nazrul Islam from his post.

Terminating the removal order 'illegal', RUTA decided to take greater action programme from April 25 to reinstate Nazrul Islam.

RUTA termed the role of the VC as 'heinous' and said through such activities the VC was lingering the process of reopening the university. "It seems that he does not actually want reopening of the university on May 8, the due date, they added."

The Midnight File

Naruhito's wedding June 9

TOKYO, Apr 19: Japanese Crown Prince Naruhito's wedding to former career diplomat Masako Owada was officially set for June 9, a spokesman for the Imperial Household Agency said today. The spokesman said the royal wedding would be held at the imperial palace in central Tokyo on that date, followed by a banquet at the palace to last for three days from June 15, reports Reuter.

Massive 'yes' vote for changing Italy's voting system

ROME, Apr 19: First computer projections based on partial results predicted a massive "yes" vote in a referendum on changing Italy's voting system — with 82.4 per cent of the electorate voting in favour, reports Reuter.

Jute goods export

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petive in the international market due to cheap Indian goods.

Hannan Shah pointed out that the Indian exporters got a 40 per cent incentive on their exports, bore a low interest rate (only nine per cent) and a low price for power. But the Bangladesh manufacturers did not get any of these facilities, the minister said adding that these had resulted in the disadvantage to local exporters.

The special fund would be provided from government's block allocation in the budget. Meanwhile, with the increasing dominance of synthetic fibres in the western market, Bangladesh will completely lose its market of Carpet Backing Cloth (CBC) within the next two years.

"For this Bangladesh will be deprived of about 30 and 40 million US dollars annually," the Jute Minister told the press briefing.

However, he said that Bangladesh would have a bright prospect in the future if it could go for diversification of its jute goods like manufacturing disposable garbage bags.

"Different western research companies are ready to help us in this regard," the Jute Minister said.

His observations came following a recent trip to the USA, UK, Belgium and France to expand the jute market. He was accompanied by the chairman of the BJMC, the BJMA and three other officials.

Brig. Hannan said that the death of the CBC came following a government decision in 1985 not to export any jute goods for which the western

countries developed synthetic fibres as alternatives.

"During our trip, we had shown the western importers our samples of disposable garbage bags which they appreciated," the Jute Minister said. "They have asked for more samples. And if they agree to buy, we will be able to export about 50000 metric tons of bags a year."

The minister also said that there was a "tremendous demand for jute carpets in Europe" and added that the BJMC had an advance booking for the product for the next five months.

Hannan Shah further said that the government would undertake a joint venture with China for a paper mills using jute cuttings as raw material.

He said that an agreement for the project was likely to be signed this month. The mills would have the capacity to produce 45000 metric tons of paper annually.

Highlighting the prospects for other jute goods, the minister said that the country would be able to export 15000 metric tons of hessian this year compared to its normal 10000 to 12000 tons as US companies were interested to use it in packing potatoes. He also said that European buyers were interested to import jute shopping bags. "But we have to keep our prices competitive," Hannan Shah observed.

He also said that many French research companies had developed silk and other products from jute and these companies were interested to collaborate with Bangladesh to diversify its jute products.

Fenchuganj plant

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According to their estimates, the project needed some 6000 million yen more.

In this context, the Bangladesh government asked the Japanese government to fund 5000 million yen more. It also held discussions with the Japanese bidders and managed to lower the quoted estimate slightly.

On May 27, 1992, the ECNEC approved the project profile of Tk 404 crore. But in the meantime the conversion rate of the yen against taka had changed and added another complexity. In '87-'88 the conversion rate of the yen against taka was around 4.75:1 in February-March of this year, the ratio stood at 3.12:1.

This devaluation of taka against a roaring yen had escalated the project cost from Tk 404 crore to Tk 561 crore for which the production cost of power by the project would be double that of the other plants.

However, the 3170 million Japanese assistance for the project would mean Tk 443 crores, while the rest would be funded by the government.

Among the two Japanese firms, Suratomo Corporation was the lowest bidder. The PDB and Sumitomo signed a turnkey contract on February 27 to implement the project.

While some sources consider power production by this plant "non-viable" the PDB does not share this point of view.

According to PDB sources, the per MW cost including power line installation for the consumers may run up to Taka 8.50 crore, the same as it is in the case of other plants.

Other sources said that considering power line installation, the per MW cost of the Fenchuganj project would be much higher, than Tk 8.50 crores.

However, the sources informed that such enhancement in the project cost had

Attempt to push in 7 more

LALMONIRHAT, Apr 19:

BDR foiled an attempt of Indian Border Security Force (BSF) to push seven Bangla-speaking Indian nationals into Bangladesh through Gorakmandal border in Fulbari thana of Kurigram district early today (Monday), reports UNB.

BDR sources said BSF brought the Indian nationals to Gorakmandal border point at about 2 am to force them into Bangladesh territory but the BDR men thwarted the attempt.

taken place in almost all foreign-funded projects to some extent, due to change in the conversion rates of foreign currencies against the taka.

Meanwhile, the land-filling for the low-lying project construction site in Fenchuganj is being carried out. Only the land-filling would cost the government Tk 150 crore.

At present the power stations of the country generate 2400 MW, but due to system loss, these stations are able to supply only about 1700 MW.

Cabinet

From Page 1 Col 8

Finance Division of the Ministry of Finance, were approved at the regular weekly meeting of the cabinet held at Bangabhaban with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair.

The ordinances will also provide protection to the interest of investors, development of security markets and regulation and control of the stock exchange or any stock market business.

At the meeting, the cabinet was also apprised of a report on the outcome of recent visit of a high-power delegation to North Korea and China under the leadership of Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain.

Ministers, State Ministers-in-charge of different ministries and divisions attended the meeting.

Ctg anchorage

From Page 1 Col 4

agent here — Continental Traders — on charge of bringing smuggled goods into Bangladesh territorial waters.

Besides, the anti-smuggling drive in the outer anchorage has been stepped up on receipt of information about the involvement of some liner vessels in carrying and selling contrabands there, the Deputy Collector added.

He informed that after the seizure of the smuggled goods from those two Ukrainian ships some officials of the local Russian consulate had contacted him, claiming the seized goods were "declared goods".

But Customs officials turned down their excuse saying that those two ships were caught while waiting to sell the contrabands surrounded by many engine boats and sampans at the outer anchorage. The crew members moreover, declared the goods after the raids by the anti-smuggling team, when they sensed danger, the Deputy Collector added.