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NEWS BRIEFS

AL defers Ctg hartal to July 4

CHITTAGONG, June 21: The local Awami League has deferred its planned hartal to July 4 in the port city to protest what it called the government repression on party's central leader Akhteruzzaman Babu, reports UNB.

Saudi sacrificial meat due in July

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, June 21: The sacrificial meat from Saudi Arabia is likely to reach here by the first week of July, official sources said. The consignment of meat will comprise of about 60,000 carcasses — meant for distribution among the poor people of Bangladesh, official sources added. The Saudi Government donates the sacrificial meat to Bangladesh every year after the Eid-ul-Azha festival.

Huge quantity of gunja seized

A special squad of the Department of Narcotics Control seized a huge quantity of gunja and illegal liquor in raids from different places of the city during the last two days. Ten persons were arrested in this connection. Cases were filed against the accused under the Narcotics Control Law, 1990, reports BSS.

HC recalls order summoning May 11 JS proceedings

By Staff Correspondent

The High Court Bench of the Supreme Court, which had called for the May 11 Parliament proceedings, recalled its order Monday, Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali informed the House yesterday.

The bench, comprising Justice Fazole Hussain Mohammad Habibur Rahman and Justice Mainur Reza Chowdhury, had issued an order on Thursday summoning the May 11 proceedings of the Parliament to examine a contempt of court charge against Information Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda.

Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah Saturday raised the question in Parliament demanding a debate in the House on whether the rights of the Parliament, conferred by Article 78 of the Constitution, had been infringed by the High Court order.

After a brief discussion on the issue, the Speaker said "As the court has recalled its previous order, so there is no need to debate the matter."

He read out both the orders of the court and said that no such order was issued for the Parliament Secretariat.

Initiating the discussion yesterday, Rafiqul Islam Miah said that under Article 78 of the Constitution the proceedings of Parliament should not be called into question outside the House.

"The validity of the proceeding in Parliament shall not be questioned in any court... a member of Parliament shall not be liable to proceedings in any court in respect of anything said, or any vote given, by him in Parliament or in any committee there of," says Article 78.

The Minister pointed out

some examples of the UK and India regarding the issue.

Tofael Ahmed of the Awami League, Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury of the NDP and Moudud Ahmed of the Jatiya Party took part in the brief discussion on the subject.

Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, quoting the second order of the court, said that the language of the order "The proceedings are no longer required" implies that the court has the right to summon Parliament documents.

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LDP rebels in Japan form new party

TOKYO, June 21: Japan's political upheaval gave birth to a new party today after prompting a wave of nervous selling in financial markets as ruling conservative party rebels pushed the idea of a coalition with the opposition, reports AFP.

Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa, meanwhile, picked two trusted senior members of his own faction and another loyal group to replace two ministers who betrayed him on Friday by crossing the floor to vote with the opposition.

The two ministers had both resigned earlier to join former Finance Minister Tsutomu Hata and other LDP rebels in supporting a no-confidence

motion, forcing Miyazawa to dissolve the lower house and call a snap July 18 election.

The new party formed today, known as the Sakigake or 'Pioneer Party', comprises 10 disenchanted members of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

Masayoshi Takemura, a 58-year-old former mayor of Yokohama in western Japan, who has served only two terms in the lower house, told a news conference that the group was devoted to "political ethics and political reform."

He hinted that the group might support the small but increasingly popular Japan New Party, launched by an-

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Agreement on draft of Vienna Declaration

VIENNA, June 21: A working group at the UN human rights conference here has reached broad agreement on a draft declaration on human and economic development rights, balancing claims by the West and Third World states.

Overall we are convinced that the working group, composed of representatives of the states, will finish its work on the final conference document in time for Wednesday evening conference spokeswoman Therese Gastaut told AFP.

The document would be able to be adopted by the plenary session on Thursday, she added.

Western states have called for strong international action
See Page 12 Col 4

Zaki in city for consultations on SAARC activities

Ibrahim Hussain Zaki, Secretary General of the SAARC, flew in Dhaka yesterday on a three-day visit for consultations on SAARC activities, reports BSS.

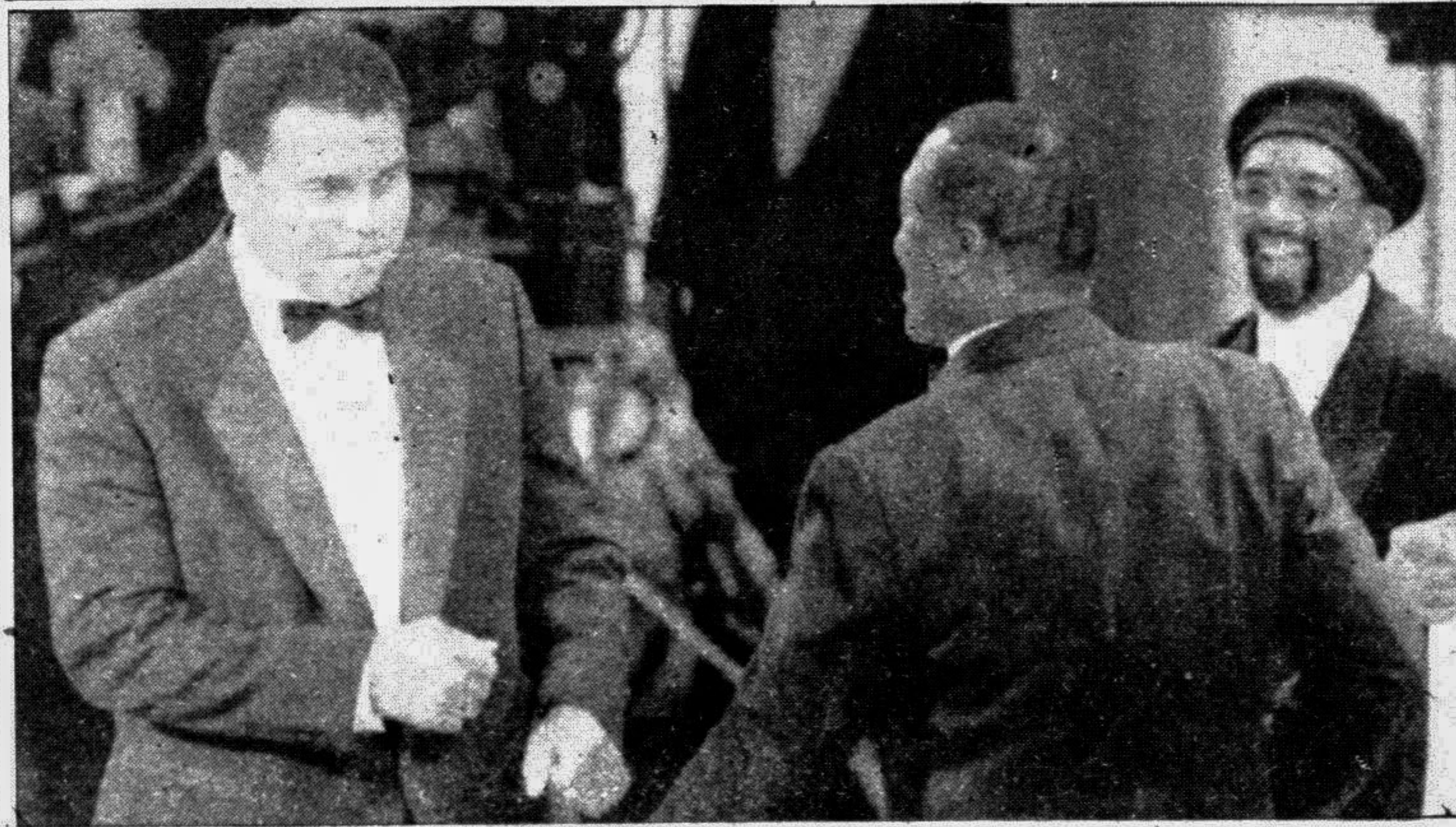
"This is my first visit here since the seventh summit and I will have the opportunity of having the opinion and advice of madame Prime Minister, who is the chairperson of the SAARC," he told newsmen at the Zia International Airport on arrival.

Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman received the SAARC Secretary General at the airport.

Zaki said some of the SAARC activities had to be postponed earlier and there was a need now to re-schedule these programmes.

He said that the SAARC activities were going on "well" since Bangladesh took over the chairmanship over two months ago.

For instance, he said, a
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Former heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali (L) pretends to square off against former fighter and opponent Joe Frazier (2nd R) before Frazier awarded him the National Sports Award June 20 at the National Sports Award Gala in Washington. Looking on (R) is film director Spike Lee.

Iqbal Mahmood report Petrobangla's dilemma

By Inam Ahmed

The government, and Petrobangla in particular, is facing a dilemma over whether to blacklist a foreign consultancy firm.

According to sources, British civil engineering firm Pencil Engineering, hired as consultants for the controversial North-South Pipeline Project, may after all avoid being blacklisted by the government, on the basis of the recommendations of the Iqbal Mahmood Committee, which investigated the bungling in the North-South Project, constructed by Italian firm Saipem. The probe report recommended that Pencil should be blacklisted for committing various irregularities in the popularly known 'Saipem affair'.

But the project implementation unit (PIU) of Petrobangla, in a recent letter to the chairman of the corporation, said that if Pencil is, blacklisted, the existing contracts with the firm would become

void automatically and give rise to various legal and financial complications.

Sources said the donors of the project, the British Oda, the Netherlands government, the UNDP and the World Bank, must be consulted before any such move is taken. Even if their consent is received, the processing of the cancellation order may take another six months.

Pencil is now engaged in the consultancy work of three process plants — the 90 mm-cfd molecular turbo expander plant at Kailashilla, the 70 mm-cfd silicagel plant at Rashidpur and the 60 mm-cfd glycol dehydration plant. It is also working as a consultant to the Ashganj metering station.

Petrobangla feels that if steps are taken to blacklist Pencil, the resultant stalemate may mar the supervision of the contractor's works at the processing plants.

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Opposition seeks adjournment of JS in view of floods

By Staff Correspondent

The opposition members of Parliament Monday demanded adjournment of the House for a day for them to visit and observe the "severe flood situation" in greater Sylhet district.

They also demanded declaration of the district as a "distressed area" and sought more relief for the affected people.

But the Treasury Bench members turned down the opposition demands saying that it was a flash flood and a massive relief operation had already been undertaken. So, there was no need to adjourn

Parliament or declare the zone as a "distressed area," they insisted.

Both the opposition and treasury members, however, agreed on the need for finding a permanent solution to the recurrent floodings and post-flood rehabilitation problems.

Taking part in the discussion on the matter of public importance, acting Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad said that millions of people in the greater Sylhet district were now in a distressed situation and the MPs should stand by them at their time of

need.

He said that floods hit the district on June 6 when Parliament resumed for the budget session.

Sylhet, Sunamganj, Habiganj and Moulvibazar districts were worst hit while neighbouring Netrokona and Kishoreganj districts were also affected, he said.

Abdus Samad Azad, who submitted the notice under Article 68 of the Rules of Procedure, said that rail communication between Dhaka and Sylhet was snapped twice because of the floods.

No change in situation

From Our Correspondent

SYLHET, June 21: The overall flood situation in the Sylhet region remained static today as there was no rain during last 24 hours.

However, all the rivers including the Surma and Kushiyara were still flowing above danger levels at different points.

The rail communications between Sylhet and Dhaka were restored this evening. The road link between Sylhet and rest of the country was also restored.

Road link between Sylhet and its four thanas Goainhat, See Page 12 Col 2

BNP persecuting its opponents: Hasina

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina has accused the ruling BNP of persecuting its political opponents including Awami League in a bid to stick to power, reports UNB.

Hasina was addressing a rally jointly organised by the Netherlands unit of Awami League and Nirmul Coordination Council at Amsterdam Free University auditorium on Friday last, a party press release said yesterday.

The Awami League President said BNP has betrayed with the causes of anti-autocracy movement and resorted to undemocratic activities including repression and

politicisation to consolidate its power.

She blamed the government for patronising anti-liberation Jamaat-Shibir clique and not holding trial of war criminal Golam Azam as per four-point agreement signed between government and the opposition in parliament.

The Leader of the Opposition in parliament also criticised the ruling party for its failure to resolve the problems of sharing the Ganges water with India and repatriation of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar. She said Indian goods have flooded the

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Debate on budget continues

By Staff Correspondent

The ruling party legislators yesterday observed in Parliament that the implementation of the budgetary provisions proposed by the Finance Minister would help remove poverty of the country.

The Treasury Bench members hailed the budget for 1993-94 because "it incorporated programmes for the development of the country's human resources."

They also claimed that the government had been successful in restoring discipline in the economy and putting it on the right track. They said that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and per capita income had increased while the rate of inflation had been reduced.

But the opposition members rejected the govern-

ment's claim of success and observed that no sensible person could praise the proposed budget because it had not provided any concrete sense of direction towards the solution of basic problems of the majority of the people living in the rural areas.

The opposition MPs also criticised the budget for its failure to offer any hope for generating employment opportunities for the people.

As many as 25 MPs belonging to treasury and opposition benches took part in the general discussion on the budget yesterday.

The Workers' Party's Rashed Khan Menon criticised the Finance Minister for his tenacious advocacy for a market economy, "especially in a

situation when the western countries had developed a tendency of denying the sovereignty of the market."

The western economists have realised that a total free market virtually invites discrimination in both the economy and social organisations," Menon added.

The solitary Workers Party MP also observed that the government had left the country's economy to the private sector and the task of poverty alleviation to the non-government organisations (NGOs).

Menon urged the government for creating an effective domestic market by ensuring fair price for agricultural products of the peasants. "Increase of purchasing capacity of the

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An 'undeclared minister'?

The budget debate in Parliament yesterday led to a noisy altercation over a ruling party MP's alleged interference in the administration of the northern Dinajpur district, reports UNB.

Awami League member Mizanur Rahman Manu, taking part in the budget debate, complained that Begum Khurshid Jahan Huq was poking her nose into local administrative affairs and called her an undeclared minister of Dinajpur.

Manu alleged that Khurshid Jahan, the elder sister of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, over-steps her jurisdiction and runs the district administration at her sweet will. She also indis-

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Spotlight: Beel Kuralia Epitome of shady land distribution policy

by Masud Hasan Khan

CHATMOHAR, Pabna: The conflict over khas land of Beel Kuralia in Chatmohar thana is an upshot of the anachronistic land laws and lengthy legal procedures of the country. Questionable government land distribution policy has also confounded the problem.

Beel Kuralia is only one such pocket of khas lands that dot the country where all the legal tangles have created a complicated knot and social forces continue to fight for decades over control of the fertile flood plains.

The 1987 Land Reform Ordinance of the government pronounces that the landless peasants should get priority in receiving state-owned land.

Every landless family should receive two acres of khas land which would be non-transferable and the land would remain under the joint names of both the husband and the wife — a measure against possible divorce, it says.

A senior official of the Chatmohar Thana Administration, however, pointed out that the actual policy is hardly enforced and the landless are usually left out during distribution of the khas land.

In the Beel Kuralia case, the problem has been multiplied because of contradicting executive decisions

While all the cases of the khas land claims were pending in the courts, the Deputy Commissioner of Pabna had permanently leased out the khas land in favour of 408 applicants.

Landless people of Beel Kuralia alleged that some of these lessees had sold out the khas land to others, further complicating the legal tangle.

To the landless people of Chatmohar, Beel Kuralia symbolises the last refuge.

The former waterbody is very fertile and yields two crops — boro and aman — a year.

With an average yield of 75 maunds per acre, the total arable land at Beel Kuralia produces some 22,000 maunds of rice every year, according to a rough estimate.

Back in 1945, the large natural land depression and its adjoining lands belonged to the local landed gentry — the Raybahadur of Natore, Annada Prasanna Lahiri of Kustampur, Kshittish Chandra Chowdhury of Haripur and Krishna Das Kundu of Dhanail.

The Pakistan government acquired the land after partition. Later, 98 local *Jotedars* (rich landowners) recorded all the land and the beel in their names, claiming they had

See Page 12 Col 4

Professionals' body to announce fresh programme July 16

By Staff Correspondent

The Central Action Council of the Engineers, Agriculturists, Physicians and Civil Servants is expected to announce a fresh course of action at its delegates' conference on July 16 next.

The council, at a general meeting yesterday, called upon the central leaders of the organisation to chalk out their fresh programme of action on July 16 since the deadline, set by the Prime Minister herself, for the implementation of the council's 17-point charter of demands expires July 15.

Yesterday's general meeting, presided over by the organisation's chairman Mohammad Abu Hena, adopted 12 resolutions.

One such resolution regretted that the promotions, made in contravention of Public Service Commission rules and regulations, at the administration's top level since April 1991, had not yet been cancelled.

Another resolution condemned the reported attempt of squeezing the business of the Works Ministry and the Directorate of Works by decentralising their functions at other ministries through violation of relevant clauses of the government's "Allocation of Business".

The meeting also protested the presence of magistrates in examination halls and strongly demanded the formation of a BCS (Architecture) cadre, for the architects of the Directorate of Architecture.

N-energy accord with US to be renewed

The cabinet has decided to approve the proposal of the Science and Technology Division for renewal of the agreement for cooperation between Bangladesh and the United States of America concerning peaceful uses of nuclear energy signed in 1981, reports BSS.

An official handout said, the approval was given yesterday at the regular weekly meeting of the cabinet.

According to the agreement the USA and Bangladesh will cooperate in the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes which will extend to the transfer of information, material, equipment and components



Salman F. Rahman

Salman F. Rahman, president of the Bangladesh Pharmaceutical Society (BPS), and former president of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Monday said the proposed budget for 1993-94 has a long-term perspective and is a progressive one.

"It is a part of the on-going reform programme of the government," Rahman said.

The past budgets were piecemeal in nature. But the proposed one has overcome that deficiency," he said.

Star Report

The most striking aspect of the budget is the Finance Minister's stress on good governance," Rahman said, and added "if the government can go ahead with it, the economy will go a long way. For this, the citizens of the country have a role to play along with the government's own role."

"If we can implement the sense of direction provided in the budget, the industrialisation process would also get a fillip," he said.

Rahman, Vice Chairman of the Beximco Group also pre-

dicted that the economy will see a robust year ahead, as the macroeconomic indicators in the current year are all favourable.

He welcomed the reduction in corporate tax, but said, the budget should have contained more incentives for development of the capital market.

Rahman also lauded the Finance Minister handling of the issue of protection to local industries by saying "Too much protection and control make industries inefficient".