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NEWS BRIEFS

PM returns today

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia returns home today ending her week-long visit to the United States and the United Kingdom, reports BSS.

During her six-day stay in New York Begum Khaleda Zia made a significant speech in the 48th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on October 1. In her debut in the world body since her election as the Prime Minister Begum Zia highlighted an overview of the current regional and global situation.

One shot dead in Chittagong

CHITTAGONG, Oct 6: One Mahabub Alam, 16, was allegedly shot dead by some armed miscreants at Dewannagar under Hathajari thana here today, district police said. The miscreants took Mahabub Alam out of his house and shot him dead. The incident was said to be a sequel to family dispute, reports BSS.

3 Shibir activists hurt in JCD attack

CHITTAGONG, Oct 6: Three activists of pro-Jamaat Chhatra Shibir were injured when a group of JCD supporters allegedly attacked them at Boalkali Sirajul Islam College today. The injured were identified as Mohammad Yusuf, Jashimuddin and Kamrul Islam, reports UNB.

Quayum Sardar murder: 2 held

Police arrested yesterday two youths for their alleged involvement in the sensational murder of Quayum Sardar of Hajjaribagh in the city. A DMP press release said a special squad of the Detective Branch of DMP arrested Prakash Kumar Biswas and Tanjirul Islam alias Liton from city areas, reports UNB.

Looted rifles recovered

CHITTAGONG, Oct 6: Two rifles along with 10 bullets, looted from policemen, were recovered from the Jumbury field at Agrabad in Doublmouring thana today, reports UNB.

Benazir alleges rigging: Final results today

Low turnout in Pak polls

ISLAMABAD, Oct 6: Pakistanis, fed up with their third national election in five turbulent years, turned out in small numbers at the polls Wednesday even as the popular Benazir Bhutto sought a return to power, report AP, AFP.

Checks at various polling stations in the impoverished Asian nation suggested less than half of Pakistan's registered voters had cast ballots by the time the polls closed.

Bhutto's liberal Pakistan People's Party appeared to have a slight edge over the conservative Pakistan Muslim League headed by millionaire industrialist Nawaz Sharif. But there were no reliable opinion polls and most analysts say the race between the two former prime

ministers was too close to call. The party that wins the most votes for the 217-member national assembly names the prime minister. Final results were expected Thursday morning.

Benazir said after the close

LAHORE, Oct 6: Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his arch-rival Benazir Bhutto were both assured of National Assembly seats in today's parliamentary elections, initial unofficial results said. Sharif's brother Shahbaz and brother-in-law Sher Ali were also leading, reports AFP.

of polls today that there had been rigging in her constituency, but praised the army for its role in safeguarding the polls.

"My electoral lists were tampered with, the presiding officers were biased in some cases,

and many of my people were turned away being told they were not on the list," she said after returning home from a tour of her constituency.

However, Bhutto gave a clean bill of health to the army which is supervising the elec-

tions saying: "The armed forces were very cooperative and ensured that no fake votes were cast."

Bhutto said the "rigging" would not affect the outcome of the poll in her constituency, but expressed concern that: "If this

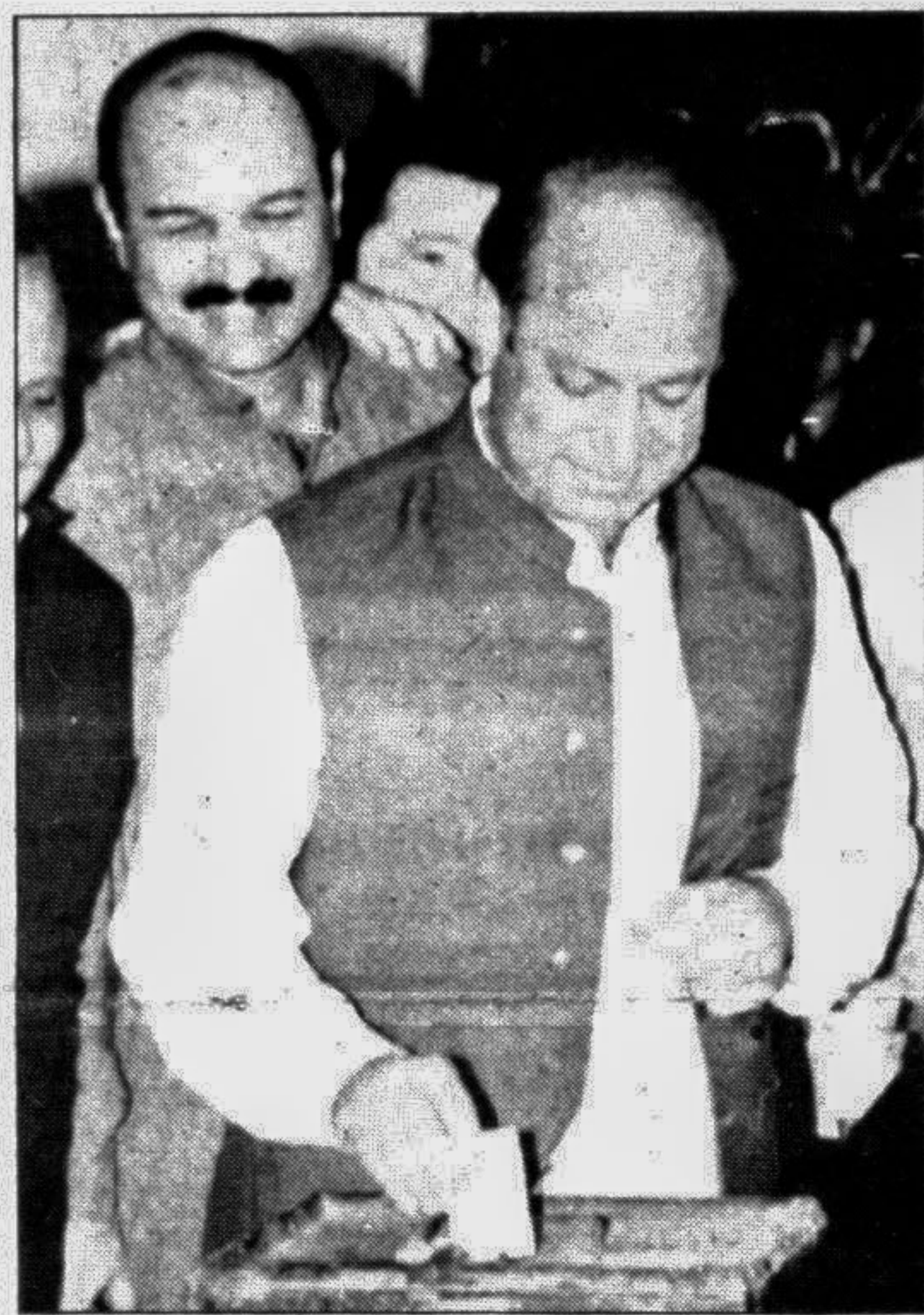
can happen in my constituency where there is no real contest... what will happen in hotly contested seats?"

Bhutto is the daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the prime minister who was ousted in a 1977 military coup and hanged in April 1979.

She rose to power in 1988 after the death of the man who toppled her father, dictator Zia ul-Haq, restoring democracy after 11 years of military rule and becoming the first woman leader of a modern Muslim state. But her government was dismissed 20 months later by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, who accused her of corruption and mismanagement.

She lost to Sharif in the

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Former Prime Ministers Mian Nawaz Sharif (left) of the Muslim League and Benazir Bhutto (right) of the Pakistan People's Party casting votes in their respective constituencies yesterday. Both predicted their parties would sweep two-thirds of the vote in the general elections in Pakistan.



Govt-WB haggle over viability of jute sector reform project

by S Y Bakht

The government and the World Bank are differing over ways to offset the increase in costs of the planned Jute Sector Restructuring Project (JSRP) following the recent wage hike for public sector workers.

"The recent wage hike undermines the credibility of the JSRP as any (such) increase will further increase the losses of the public sector jute mills and will also prolong the adjustment period (envisaged) under the project," said a source at the World Bank (WB) resident mission. "The wage hike will have serious implications on the viability of the jute sector."

A highly-placed Jute Ministry source however insisted that the status of the project remains on track. "The government is committed to keep the JSRP on track at any cost," he said.

Both sides acknowledged

that negotiations are continuing and indicated that the issue would be discussed and most likely finalised during the Finance Minister's present visit to Washington. The funding proposal may also be placed before the current WB board meeting in the US capital.

The Bank is seeking additional jute sector cost reduction commitments from the government while the Jute Ministry is arguing that cost-cutting measures already implemented by the Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) would balance out the wage hike-induced cost increase of the project.

Both sides are also disagreeing over the extent of the project's cost overrun, primarily on account of enhanced retrenchment benefits, caused by the pay raise.

The three-year JSRP, designed to restore viability of the

jute sector by capacity reduction, workforce rationalisation and debt restructuring, was scheduled to begin this month but got delayed over the wage hike issue.

The International Development Agency, the soft-term lending arm of the WB, had earlier agreed to provide a 250 million US dollar loan towards meeting the Tk 1500 crore cost of the project.

The Jute Ministry source said the project is now tentatively scheduled to begin before the end of the year. "We inform and talk to all sides involved in the project and provide them with an opportunity to opt out of the project," he added.

The WB is asking for a further reduction of the workforce than what was originally planned under the project, closure and privatisation of more

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CMM orders security for Taslima Nasrin

By Staff Correspondent

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) has ordered security measures for author Taslima Nasrin and a judicial enquiry into the activities of a religious organisation that had recently put a price on Nasrin's head.

CMM Shahiduddin Ahmed passed the orders yesterday after the physician-turned-author filed a petition seeking security for her life.

The CMM, on hearing the appeal of the plaintiff, ordered the city Police Commissioner and the Motijheel thana to take measures for the security of Nasrin, 31, especially for three days, beginning today when the deadline set by the Sahaba Sainik Parishad for government action against the writer who has raised some controversy through her writings expires.

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PM asks envoys to East Europe

Pursue economic diplomacy for trade abroad

LONDON, Oct 6: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today asked the Bangladesh envoys in European countries to pursue economic diplomacy to expand Bangladesh's trade abroad, reports BSS.

She said the envoys should pursue diplomacy from economic angle projecting the trade and economic policies of Bangladesh abroad to expand trade relations with the countries of their accreditation.

The Prime Minister, who arrived here last night on her way back to Dhaka was addressing

the Bangladesh envoys in European countries at Hotel Hilton.

Begum Zia told the envoys to establish good rapport with the foreign investors and project Bangladesh's policies on market economy, privatisation and incentives and facilities being provided to the foreign investors.

The Prime Minister laid stress on expanding the existing foreign market for Bangladesh goods including jute goods, leather, ready-made garments

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43.31 pc pass Rajshahi Board HSC exams

By Staff Correspondent

The results of the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) Examinations of 1993, held under the Rajshahi Board, were announced yesterday showing a pass percentage of 43.31.

The Rajshahi Government College bagged 12 positions in the merit list of the Science Group. 13 of the top 20 positions of the Humanities Group and 15 positions in the Commerce Group.

According to the results published, 65,890 students — 46,018 male and 19,872 female — appeared in the examinations of whom 28,541 passed.

Of the successful candidates, 2941 passed in the first division, 13,422 were placed in the second division while 12,178 got the third division.

The pass percentage in the Science Group is 71.45, in the Commerce Group 49.53 and 38.77 for the Humanities Group.

The number of successful male candidates was 20,653 with a pass percentage of 44.88 while 7,888 girls passed for a pass percentage of 39.69.

Abdullah-al-Mahmud of the Rajshahi Cadet College (Raj Cadet No 7) topped the combined merit list from the Science Group. Mahmud se-

cured 958 marks with distinctions in Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and Engineering.

A S Mahmud Arshad (Raj No 723) and Apurba Kumar Sarker (Raj No 718) of the Rajshahi Government College secured second and third positions respectively. Arshad got 944 marks while Apurba obtained 942. Both secured distinctions in Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and Statistics.

In the Humanities Group, Farhat Tasnin of Rajshahi College (Raj No 236) secured the top position in the merit list with 868 marks and distinctions in Statistics, Logic, Psychology and Islamic Studies.

Mohammad Firoz Ahmed of Rajshahi Cadet College (Raj Cadet No-2) and Sammyasathi Bhoumik of the Rajshahi College (Raj No-139) stood second and third respectively in the Humanities Group. Firoz Ahmed got 845 marks while Sammyasathi Bhoumik obtained 839.

In the Commerce Group, Md Sanaur Rahman of Rajshahi College (Raj No-988) stood first in order of merit obtaining 752 marks with distinctions in Accounting and Statistics.

Md Jahangir Hasan (Raj No- See Page 12 Col 6

Industries Ministry to offer one-stop services

By Staff Correspondent

Industries Minister M Zahiruddin Khan said yesterday his ministry would take larger responsibility of meeting the needs of the entrepreneurs by introducing one-stop services for them.

He said the Industries Ministry itself would try to solve the problems of the entrepreneurs and they would not need to go to other ministries after introduction of the services.

Zahiruddin Khan was exchanging views with the directors and members of the Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI) yesterday afternoon at the board room of the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC). State Minister for Industries Lutfor Rahman Khan was also present.

The Industries Minister said his ministry would try its best to remove all the bottlenecks

toward industrialisation.

"We want you as partners...The failure of the entrepreneurs is in fact the failure of the Industries Ministry," he said and added that the ministry is also interested in joint ventures with the private entrepreneurs.

Agreeing with the allegation of the entrepreneurs against the banks, Zahiruddin said the banks often do not follow the instructions of the government.

They are sitting on money yet the real entrepreneurs are not getting loans from them, he said and added that the arbitrary attitude of the bankers must go. "Very soon the banks would chase after the real entrepreneurs for providing money," the minister predicted, assuring the industrialists of all-out efforts in this regard by the government.

Zahiruddin Khan said the

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Life returning to normal in Moscow

MOSCOW, Oct 6: Soldiers disarmed and arrested several groups of gunmen Wednesday as violent resistance to President Boris Yeltsin collapsed and the government took full control of the capital, report AP, AFP.

Isolated attacks by snipers were reported overnight, but there were no casualties. Yeltsin's government continued to crack down on the opposition. Several mainstream Moscow newspapers appeared Wednesday with blank spots on their pages where articles had been censored and removed. But the government later Wednesday ended censorship, saying it was a temporary emergency step.

Yeltsin also declared Thursday an official day of mourning when victims of the armed clashes in Moscow will be buried, Interfax news agency said today.

A decree issued by the

Russian leader said flags would be flown at half mast from government buildings.

Government troops and tanks stormed the parliament building Monday and crushed armed resistance by some 1,500 lawmakers and their supporters. Hard-liners were holed up

MOSCOW, Oct 6: The 24-hour honour guard at Lenin's mausoleum in Moscow's Red Square was abolished on the orders of the Kremlin guard command today, Itar-Tass news agency reported. The guard has been maintained since the Soviet state founder was interred on the spot in 1924, reports AFP.

in the building for almost two weeks after refusing Yeltsin's order to disband and hold new elections.

Life was returning to normal in Moscow Wednesday with heavy commuter traffic headed to the city center. Tanks were pulled back from around the blackened parliament building and fewer troops were seen on the streets.

Officials were considering what charges would be filed against the parliament leaders, former vice president Alexander Rutskoi and parliament speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov. The two men and other top leaders were being held in high-security prisons.

Yeltsin, in an address on national television today, said hard-liners in regional governments had to share responsibility for the violent struggle for power that had shaken Russia. He suggested elections for new regional legislatures be held in December along with national parliamentary elections.

He also confirmed elections for new national parliament would be held in December, as announced previously. Yeltsin continued to tighten his grip on the government. The chairman of Russia's Constitutional Court, Valery Zorkin, has resigned under pressure after suffering a heart attack, the court's spokesman Yuri Rudkin said today in a statement quoted by Interfax. Zorkin, who was close to the hardline rebels who had holed up in the Russian parliament before being flushed out by government forces Monday, suffered a heart attack Tuesday night, amid the strong pressure for his departure, informed sources at the court said.

On Monday, Yeltsin dismissed Russia's chief prosecutor Valentin Stepankov, apparently hoping to avoid a repeat of Stepankov's botched prosecution of the plotters of the 1991 coup attempt. He also fired two

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Electricity voltage drops significantly in city

By Sharier Khan

The voltage level of the electricity supply in the city has dropped sharply over the past five days.

According to the Chairman of the Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA), at some places, mostly the densely populated parts, the level had dropped to 177 volts in the evenings against the usual supply of 230 volts.

Sources in the DESA told The Daily Star last night that the authority was not in a position to give a definite date for resumption of normal supply.

Chairman of the DESA, explaining the situation, told this correspondent that the voltage level had decreased because the 210-megawatt (MW) power plant at Ghorashal was undergoing maintenance. "There is no

stand-by power station to supply the deficit units of power", the Chairman added.

According to a concerned official of the DESA, the 230-kv power station in Tongi, one of the sources of the city's power supply, is presently receiving less than 200-kv of electricity while the various 33-kv power distribution centres of the city are receiving a supplies between 25 and 26 kv.

"This has affected the whole system under the DESA", a supervisor of the organisation said, adding, "we cannot tell you right now how soon we can restore the normal supply from the Ghorashal station."

Officials of the Power Development Board (PDB) were not available for comment.

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Notice

Today's issue contains the full transcripts of the Daily Star Round Table on "Taka Convertibility: Bane or Boon?" held on September 28. See pages 7, 8, 9 & 10.

Biman passengers asked to reach ZIA by 10 am today

By Staff Correspondent

Biman Bangladesh Airlines has requested passengers of its Chittagong, Rajshahi, Cox's Bazar, Riyadh, Jeddah, Bombay, Dubai and Athens routes to report to the airport by 10 am today to avail their flights timely.

A press release issued by Biman yesterday apprehended a traffic rush on the roads leading to the Zia International Airport.

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Remittances from Middle East increase: Mannan

By Staff Correspondent

Labour and Manpower Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday said although remittances from Bangladeshis workers in the Middle East had increased, reduction of their wages had decreased their real income.

Speaking at a press briefing held at the secretariat after returning from an official visit to Bahrain and Qatar, the minister informed that remittances from the overseas workers were Tk. 2,669 crore in 1990, Tk. 2,835 crore in '91, Tk. 3,513 crore in '92 and Tk. 1,901 crore in the first six months of this year.

The minister observed that illegal 'hundi' transactions and high fees charged by the recruiting agents had also eroded the incomes of the emigrant workers.

In 1991, about 1.40 lakh Bangladeshis found jobs in the Middle East. The number increased to 1.80 lakh in 1992 and the ministry expects that by the end of 1993 2.25 lakh Bangladeshis would find jobs there.

Terminating his visits to Bahrain and Qatar 'a success,' the

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GF begins series of public rallies from today

By Staff Correspondent

The Gano Forum has planned a series of public meetings, beginning today in different parts of the country.

Besides, the first meeting of the party's central council will take place on October 15-16 in the capital, said a party press release.

It said the planned public rallies would be organised at Cox's Bazar today, at Chittagong and Habiganj tomorrow, Sunamganj on October 12, Munshiganj on October 14, Rangpur October 20 and Gaibandha on October 21.

Central leaders would address the rallies.

The press release, signed by Secretariat member Mozharul Haque Baqui urged the central members to attend the two-day CC meeting, scheduled to begin at 4 pm on October 15 at the Rendezvous restaurant in the capital.

Meanwhile, a rally was arranged at Aatghoria of Pabna district last Tuesday as part of the party's signature campaign against terrorism. The next public gathering for mass-signature will be held at the Ishwardi Press Club today.

Armed robbery in city

By Staff Correspondent

The house of a businessman in the city's Lalbagh area was robbed in broad daylight yesterday.

The loot, in cash, gold ornaments and other valuables was estimated at about Tk 3.62 lakh. Armed gangsters broke into the house of Haji Mohammad Ali at Gangaram Road, Lalbagh, at around 11:30 am and looted at gunpoint 60 tolas of gold ornaments, other valuables and Tk 1,700 in cash.

The armed men tied up Mohammad Ali's wife Ambia Khatun, and son Amirul Islam. Haji Mohammad Ali was not present in the house at the time.

Lalbagh police said none of the culprits could be traced until late last night.