

Ershad indicted in JP office case

Former president Hussain Muhammad Ershad and two others including a minister who served under him were indicted yesterday on charges of abusing their official positions which resulted in the wastage of Taka 82 lakh in government funds, reports BSS.

The money was spent on renovating and refurbishing an abandoned house in the capital, used by the Jatiya Party as its central office.

Senior Special Judge Mohammed Abdus Salam, reading out the charge, said Ershad had committed an offence under Section 5(1) (D) of the Prevention of Corruption Act of 1947, and should be punished under Section 5(2) of the Act. Former Works Minister Mostafa Jamal Haider and former acting Works Secretary Abdur Rouf were charged with abetting the illegal activities committed by Ershad and hence were liable to punishment under Section 5(2) of the act II of the Prevention of Corruption Act of 1947 and Section 109 of the Penal Code.

It was the fourth day of appearance for the accused persons in the Special Judge's court yesterday. Hearing on the charges began on January 9 and was completed earlier.

All three accused persons pleaded "Not guilty".

The trial resumes Feb 23. The house in question, holding number 104 on road 3 of the Dhanmendi Residential Area, is a two-storied building on 1.01 bigha of land. The Janadal, the predecessor of the Jatiya Party, which got an allotment of the property in

DEPZ

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alised, then another 2362 Bangladeshis will get jobs there.

The number of jobs created in the DEPZ during the last six months is 1900. BEPZA is hoping that another 2600 new jobs will be created there during the remaining part of the current fiscal year.

Exports out of the CEPZ stood at 5.4 crore dollars during July-December 1993. The CEPZ is projecting that total exports for the current fiscal year will reach 14 crore dollars, which is 10 per cent higher than actual exports in the preceding fiscal year.

The government is trying to develop the export processing zones as enclaves where foreign investors can enjoy the benefit of cheap labour while remaining insulated from export and import restrictions. The government has plans to set up two more export processing zones — one at Khulna and another near Dhaka. Setting up of EPZs by foreign investors is also being considered by the government.

'Govt-NGOs cooperation can help regenerate forests'

By Staff Correspondent

Forests and Environment Minister Akbar Hossain yesterday called for breaking the 'vicious cycle of poverty' or an 'improve environmental situation in the country.'

Speaking on the 'Information Day' on the Village and Farm Forestry Programme, organised by the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) at Sonargaon Hotel, the minister who was the chief guest, pointed out the government's programme to retrieve the forest resources of the country.

Chaired by the SDC Head in Dhaka, Dr Peter Arnold, the opening function of the Information Day was addressed by Charge d'Affaires of Switzerland Albert Mehr and Forests and Environment Secretary Abdullah Haroon Pasha.

Highlighting the massive tree plantation campaign initiated by the present government, the minister said "In order to achieve sustainable development, we can in no way allow forest resources to be further dwindled."

He also spoke of government incentives for planting trees to sustain the process of afforestation.

The minister lauded the Village and Farm Forestry Programme of the SDC and suggested that the government could utilise the innovative idea in its own afforestation programme.

"It is satisfying to note that the programme is a move to motivate the rural people in afforestation, in both home-steads and croplands, and the people have been well motivated, he said.

Hossain underscored the need for increased cooperation between the government and

April 1984, rented it in September 1984, at a monthly rate of Taka 31,622.00. Since obtaining possession and until 30-11-1990, no rent was paid, resulting in an accumulation of arrears amounting to Taka 30,83,390.00, the charge said.

The charge said though no rent was paid, the former President, with ill motives and intentions, awarded undue advantages to the Jatiya Party by giving directives from time to time beginning January 1990. He misused his official position and violated rules to install ultramodern fittings in the house. Installations of ten air-conditioners and a fountain, furniture and carpets were provided at a cost of Taka 81,80,900.00. The amount spent was a "wastage" of government money, the charge mentioned.

It said two contractors who did the work were paid Taka 54,44,917.00 from the state exchequer. The remaining amount remained unpaid. Earlier, Public Prosecutor Abdur Razzak Khan made his submission for framing of charge.

Private agency

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tion at the airport. State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Abdul Mannan was in the chair, says an official source.

The meeting was informed that the security arrangement at Zia Airport had been strengthened through various ways like inner, outer and spot security measures.

The meeting emphasised the need for unified control and command over the airport for the sake of a better security arrangement there.

Operation of private airlines in the country also came up for discussion in the meeting. The Civil Aviation Authority informed the meeting that eight companies had applied for operation of short-take-off-and-landing (STOL) service in the private sector and that so far, four companies had been given provisional air transport licences for STOL flights. The other applicants were yet to fulfil the CAAB's guidelines.

Committee members Shah Hadduzaman (AL), Ataur Rahman Khan, Begum Rahima Khandaker and Alam Khan of the BNP, and Syed Mursheed Kamal (JP) attended the meeting.

Secretary of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism Afzalur Rahman, Chairman of the Bangladesh Civil Aviation Authority Air Commodore Shamsur Ali, acting Chairman of the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation Abul Bashir Miah and high officials of the ministry were present.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing a public meeting at the Khulna Circuit House ground yesterday in support of the BNP's mayoral candidate Sheikh Tayebur Rahman.

Ministers seek votes for Abbas

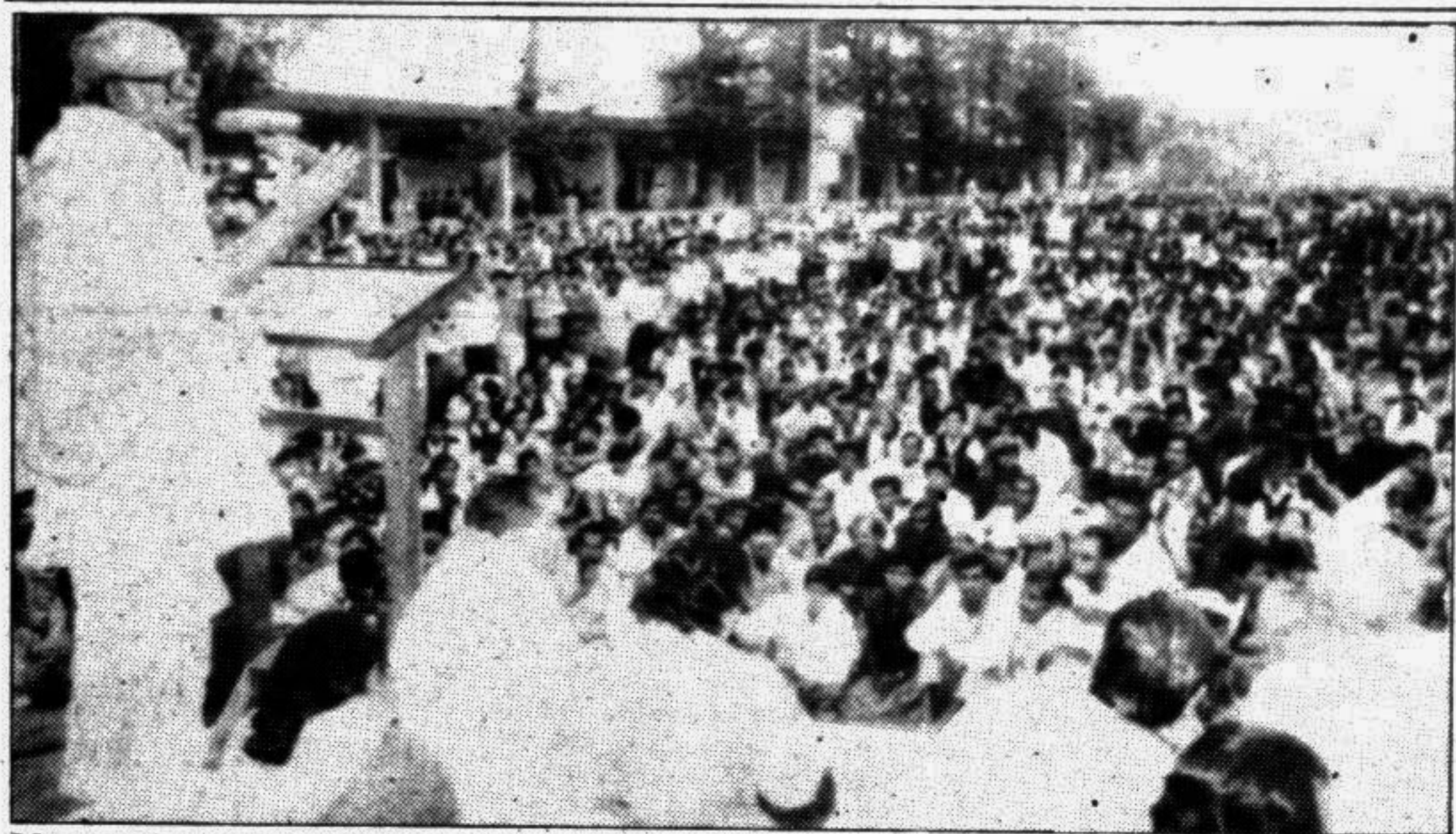
By Staff Correspondent

Ministers and party members of the ruling BNP observed a busy day yesterday seeking votes for their mayoral candidate Mirza Abbas.

According to BNP's central steering committee for election, the cultural unit of the BNP — JASAS — organised 32 rallies in the city. Another umbrella organisation, the Jatiyatabadi Rickshaw Samik Dal, held some ten rallies upholding the electoral pledges of Mirza Abbas.

Senior BNP leaders Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Goyeshwar Roy Chowdhury, Dr A Q M Badruddoza, Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia, Sarwari Rahman MP, Khairul Kabir Khokon, Abdul Hye MP, Najibur Rahman MP, M A Jalil and others attended the various election rallies in the city.

Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia in another meeting at Malibagh yesterday sought votes for the bicycle — the symbol of Mirza Abbas.



Manzurul Ahsan Khan, the DCC mayoral candidate of the Left parties, addressing a public meeting at the Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday.

I will implement project to stop water-logging, promises Hanif

By Staff Correspondent

Dhaka city mayoral candidate of the Awami League (AL) Mohammad Hanif yesterday said several foreign donor agencies had planned a Tk 100 crore project to stop water-logging in the capital but in reality that project had become a fiction.

"Where is the money those foreign donors had provided? Why has the scheme been withheld?" Mohammad Hanif said at several rallies in the city yesterday.

"I shall implement the project if I am elected the Mayor," he promised.

He was addressing campaign rallies at the Shantibagh High School, the Shahjahanpur Maitree Sangha premises, Pirjani Mazar kutcha bazar, Fakirpore bazar, Shantinagar bazar, Kamalapur, Khilgaon, Rajarbagh and Muggdapa.

"Today we can see ministers entering the narrow alleys to campaign for their candidates, but they had never been there before to see how the people were living during the last two and a half years," Hanif said.

He alleged that the Nagar Bhaban — the Dhaka City Corporation headquarters — had been turned into a den of terrorists during the last two and a half years.

The rallies were also addressed by AL leaders Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, MP, Mozaffar Hossain Palu, Mirza Sultan Raja, Fazlur Rahman, Munir Hossain Khan.

Mohammad Hanif also promised to make the DCC an accountable and a truly welfare organisation.

The AL also organised rallies in favour of its candidates in Mirpur, Labagh and Sirajuddowla Park, Jhigatola, Kalabagan, and several other places.

US rejects French proposal for peace in Bosnia

PARIS, Jan 25: The United States Monday rejected a French proposal to force the three warring sides in Bosnia to agree to peace terms, a senior US official said here, reports AFP.

French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe, in talks with visiting US Secretary of State Warren Christopher, asked the United States to "get involved in the diplomatic process to give more weight to a negotiated settlement," a spokesman for the French Foreign Ministry said.

But the US official, who wished to remain anonymous, said "we will not join into any concept of pressuring the Muslims" to agree to peace terms, adding "the party be pressured should be the Serbs."

France, the US official said, did not explain how it proposed to impose peace in Bosnia.

Paris and Washington have agreed however to continue discussions to "look at ways to revitalize the political pro-

cess" notably through meetings of experts.

A first meeting of experts took place here yesterday.

Earlier Christopher had reaffirmed America's commitment to carry out air strike in Bosnia, in particular around the besieged Muslim enclaves of Tuzla and Srebrenica.

He and Juppe both said they had "clarified" their differences over the use of force in the former Yugoslavia, but it was not clear if and when the air strikes would be carried out.

"One thing that we have clarified is that the US is prepared to carry out the commitment we have made to NATO with respect to the possible use of air power at Tuzla and Srebrenica as well as our commitment to the use of air power, if requested by military commanders," Christopher said.

The US undertaking was given at a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation summit meeting in Brussels in early January.

Hoaxes: Khaleda

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also present.

Earlier, on her way to Khulna from Jessore, Begum Zia addressed a number of gatherings at the Daulatpur New Road square, the C&B Colony, Khanjahan Nagar, Pallangan High School and Sheikhpara.

Visits Khulna Foundation

BSS adds: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia tonight visited the Khulna Foundation, a voluntary and philanthropic institution for the welfare of distressed, needy and helpless people of the district. Begum Zia went round different sections of the foundation.

Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali, Whip Mohammad Ashraf Hossain, Begum Farida Rahman, MP, Syeda Nargis Ali, MP, and former mayor of Khulna Shaikh Tayebur Rahman were also present.

Malaysian team in city

A 6-member Malaysian team headed by Dr S Noor Ghani, Director, Training and Manpower Division, Ministry of Health, Malaysia, arrived here Monday on a 8-day visit to Bangladesh. Malaysia presently has 26 students pursuing their medical studies in various colleges in Bangladesh, reports BSS.

During the visit, the team will call on the Minister for Health, Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Secretary, Ministry of Health, Syed Shamim Ahsan and Director General of Health Nurun Nabi, and other senior officials of the ministry.

The team will also visit the Dhaka Medical College, Sir Salimullah Medical College, Chittagong Medical College, Usmany Medical College, Sylhet and the Mymensingh Medical College.

DCC polls diary

By Staff Correspondent

Which is the most densely populated area in the city? Well, according to the national survey, the answer is obviously Motijheel where over seven thousand people are squeezed into every square kilometre.

But for a few minutes yesterday a campaign stall at Kalabagan took an upperhand over the city's commercial area. According to witnesses, hundreds of enthusiastic supporters of the ruling party were seen pouring into an approximate 80-square feet make-shift bamboo camp.

In every square foot of the camp at least two activists were seen shouting and chanting — rocking the scantily erected temporary roadside structure. ★ ★ ★

A humble commissioner candidate presented himself in a melting voice at Shantinagar. He seemed determined to remove the garbage problem, eager to turn the local Kutcha Bazar into a multi-storied one and solve the water-logging problem.

But the independent candidate was taken aback when a 'valued' voter said, "You are nuts, running independently when the wind is in favour of the political parties."

"You have rightly pointed out," conceded the candidate. "My friends instigated me to file the nomination paper, but now there is none with me!"

★ ★ ★
The triangular road island at Elephant Road has been wrapped up with multi-coloured sheets by a commissioner candidate.

The campaign stall, however, stands distinctly apart from other similar stalls. All day long, patriotic songs and music emanates from the stall.

Toxic fertiliser

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tural Research Organisation. Afterwards, its use was stopped as soon as the presence of toxicity was detected. The unused fertiliser has been kept in a BADC godown in sealed condition.

The handout further said a high-powered committee had been formed to investigate the matter and steps have been taken to return the unused fertiliser to the United States, as per the recommendation of the committee.

A process is underway to take legal action against the suppliers of the toxic fertiliser and their local agents. Also, the committee has been observing the reaction of this fertiliser in the areas of the country where it had been used, it added.

All the recommendations of the committee, including adoption of possible precautionary measures to avoid the import of such toxic fertiliser in future, were now being implemented.

The committee has not made any particular persons responsible for the import of this toxic fertiliser. Hence the report published in the newspaper in this respect is not at all true, the handout said.

The Midnight File

Arafat arrives in Cairo

CAIRO, Jan 25: PLO leader Yasser Arafat arrived in Cairo today for talks with President Hosni Mubarak on the latest moves to launch Palestinian autonomy, officials said here. Arafat, visiting Cairo for the third time in one week, said on arrival that he would also meet Norwegian representatives in the Egyptian capital, reports AFP.

Rafsanjani opens ECO meet

TEHRAN, Jan 25: Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani opened today a ministerial meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) with a call for an end to conflicts in Central Asia and the Caucasus. The ECO was founded in 1985 by Iran, Turkey and Pakistan and expanded in 1991 to include Afghanistan as well as the former Soviet republics of Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, reports AFP.

CEC seeks cooperation

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Hossain also spoke on the occasion.

The Chief Election Commissioner reminded the candidates of the election rules and said that stern measures would be taken against any offender and rules would be strictly enforced.

He sounded a note of warning to the mastans (gangsters and hoodlums) and said "If you indulge in any activities to disturb the election process, law will take its own course to tackle you."

He said that summary trials would be held "under 205 magistrate courts to be set up in connection with the polls. Punishment will be given for casting false voting as soon as it was detected, he added.

The Chief Election Commissioner said the commission has enforced election expenditure ceilings for the candidates, for the first time.

He said the government felt that both money and muscle were the factors which disrupted the normal election process. He said source of income of the candidates are to be submitted with the Election Commission. He reminded the candidates to give correct accounts of their expenses to the election commission in time.

Justice Rouf said that separate files were being maintained at the Election Commission on the candidates.

The Metropolitan Police Commissioner announcing a series of measures towards holding free and fair elections said that about 16,000 members of the BDR, police and ansar would be deployed in the 457 poll centres.

He said four central control rooms will be set up in the four divisional headquarters under a Deputy Commissioner. The control rooms will be manned by special squads of police, armed battalion ansar.

Indian proposals

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military pullback from the disputed Siachen glacier in northern Kashmir, the world's highest battlefield, where more soldiers die of cold than bullets. A deal on the issue fell apart in 1989.

They also included offers to settle other border disputes, turning the line dividing Indian Kashmir from the one-third of the Himalayan region ruled by Pakistan into a line of "peace and tranquility" and reviving a joint working commission.

Indian officials were equally dismissive of Bhutto's speech, in which the Pakistani leader said she would personally present accusations of Indian abuses in Kashmir at next month's meeting of the United Nations human rights commission in Geneva.

"We are getting a cascade of statements from Pakistan these days and we know she's mainly playing to the domestic gallery with the other eye on the international community," one said. "They are not to be taken all that seriously."

Poll observers

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had violated the election code of conduct.

"As the Election Commission did not say anything on the issue, we would not comment... but we would announce our pre-election observations after the polls," said Justice Sobhan, replying to a question.

The committee has opened its control rooms in all the four cities and they will work round-the-clock on January 29 and 30.

Other members of the steering committee are Dr Arefin Siddique of Dhaka University, F R Mahmud Hasan of The Gono Sahajya Sangstha, Fazle Hasan Abed of the BRAC, Brother J D'Souza of the CCHRB, M A Matin of Bangladesh Manobadhikar Bastobayon Sangstha, Rasheda K Chowdhury of ADAB, Abul Hasib Khan of Riek, Feroze M Hasan of MSS, Professor M A Aziz Khan of United Club, Kazi Faruque Ahmed of Proshika, Abdul Ahad Chowdhury of Muktiyoddha Sangad, Fauzia Muslim of the Mahila Parishad, Akram Hossain Chowdhury of the BHRCC, Khairuzzaman Kamal of the Bangladesh Human Rights Journalists' Forum and Rosy Ferdous of the Writers for Women.

Nazmul Hossain further said that 75 sub-sectors had been set up with BDR patrols in the city. Besides, he said, there will be four riot police squads in each police stations with mobile patrols to control the law and order situation.

The DMP Commissioner expressed his satisfaction that so far there was no report of any untoward incident in Dhaka city involving the mayoral election.

Manzurul Ahsan Khan, mayoral candidate of the combined left opposition, A T M Ashrafur Islam, mayor candidate of Jamaat-e-Islami, Awami League general secretary Zillur Rahman and party leaders, workers of other political parties were also present.

Talks in Tripura on Chakmas' return tomorrow

Senior officials of Bangladesh and India are expected to meet at the Tripura town of Sabrum tomorrow to work out arrangements on return of the Chakma tribals, encamped in the eastern Indian state, to their homes in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

Joint Secretary of the Home Ministry M A Mannan will lead the Bangladesh team at the talks and the Indian side will be headed by District Magistrate of south Tripura K K Aria.

Exploding crackers on Shab-e-Barat punishable

By Staff Correspondent

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner yesterday called upon the city dwellers to desist from blasting crackers for maintaining the sanctity of the holy Shab-e-Barat.

In a statement, Commissioner A N Hossain reminded that, "Blasting crackers is a punishable offence under the Metropolitan Police Act."

Hanif's claim false: Abbas

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP's mayoral candidate Mirza Abbas in a statement yesterday termed the reported claim by the Awami League (AL) candidate Md Hanif that if elected he will force Hanif to leave the Dhaka city as false and fabricated.

Abbas said the AL candidate is waging a campaign of propaganda against him and added that AL had never in the past set any example of honest politics. He urged the city people not to be misled by any propaganda.

Balance : Hasina

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its failure on the Opposition. Turning to the Farakka issue, Sheikh Hasina said the government could not resolve the crisis due to its 'subservient' foreign policy.

"There is no mention of the Farakka and Chakma repatriation issues in the Khaleda-Rao agreement, but there is a confession in Article-11 of that document which encourages India to push their Muslim population into the Bangladesh," she said in support of her contention.

Later, in the evening, the Awami League chief went from door to door in different city areas seeking votes for her party's mayoral candidate Abdul Matin Khan and the commissioner candidates.

ZIA security

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port area. Last night, some villagers tried to enter the airport perimeter to collect grass. When the two security men did not allow them, the villagers started beating them up seriously.

Some special police men on duty at the VIP lounge, hearing the commotion, rushed to the spot to rescue the two security men.

The names of the injured were not available. Meanwhile, the Uttara thana refused to take any case regarding this incident, the security officials said.

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