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Inside Today

Article
 Interview with James P Grant

UN System's Moving Spirit
 by Mahfuz Anam
 Page 4

International
 Pakistan to introduce death penalty for drug trafficking
 Indian Muslim League on the verge of split
 Page 5

Business
 Global job crisis worsening: ILO
 Abu Dhabi court rejects pleas for BCCI officials' release
 Pages 6, 7

Feature
Environment
 Natural balance and pollution of environment; How Europe dumps its plastic across the world; The Asian connection; and Green soap operas
 Page 8

Metropolitan
Dhaka Day by Day

 Medical Advance with Few Parallels
 Page 3

SAARC Chamber inaugurated South Asia can become a strong economic bloc: PM

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday said the South Asian region can emerge as a formidable economic force in the world through proper combination of men, material, machine, method and money.

A large part of responsibility for this effort lies with the entrepreneurs and businessmen of the region, Begum Zia, who is also the present Chairperson of the SAARC, said while inaugurating the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) yesterday at Hotel Sonargaon in the city.

She said Bangladesh has laid emphasis on individual initiative and the private sector as the main vehicle for economic growth.

"We are striving hard to build a framework for a market economy, in conformity with the global economic trend. Our aim is to achieve economic growth and generate employment opportunities through private initiative and creative talent," the Prime Minister said.

The policy requires some sacrifices in the short run, but will certainly benefit the commonmen in the long run, she added.

Begum Zia said the creation of an infrastructure for trade and industrial cooperation is primarily a responsibility of entrepreneurs and business community of the region. The SAARC fraternity would be cemented further if practical steps are taken towards that end, she added.

"It would then be easier for us to face the developed world confidently in the global trade scenario. The role of our political leadership has to be supportive in this regard," she pointed out.

The Prime Minister also said a permanent basis for co-operation among the SAARC countries can emerge by increasing the volume of trade among themselves. Each country can produce goods and services according to its own resource endowments and

See Page 12 Col 1

Stormy session of BNPPP Fresh demand to drop 4 cabinet ministers

The performances of some members of the cabinet came under severe criticism at the BNPP parliamentary party meeting in the city yesterday, reports UNB.

Some angry BNPP Parliament members even suggested certain ministers who were held responsible by them for the party's debacle in the city corporation polls and the present crisis over the appointment of nine judges to the High Court be dropped.

Hinting at immediate reshuffle in the cabinet, sources close to the meeting said that the final decision in this regard was left with the party chairperson.

The ministers who particularly came under criticism included Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz, Finance Minister Saifur Rahman, Home Minister Matin Chowdhury and Information Minister Nazmul Huda.

Deputy Leader of the House Dr Badruddoza Chowdhury presided over the meeting till the tea break at 5 pm. Prime Minister Begum Zia chaired the latter part of the meeting that continued till 8 pm.

The speakers pointed out that factionalism, organisational weaknesses and some government policy decisions were the major causes of the ruling party's election debacle.

Deputy Leader Dr Badruddoza Chowdhury initiated the discussion on the business of the current session of Parliament, the party's performance in city corporation elections and organisational matters.

Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz, party's Secretary General LGRD Minister Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder, Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Information Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda, Barrister Ziaur Rahman Khan, Mirza Abbas, Major (Retd) Qamrul Islam and Major (Retd) Akhtaruzzaman took part in the deliberations.

Our Staff Correspondent adds: After the debacle in the city corporation polls, the ruling party has changed its strategy and decided to break the status quo to restructure the frontlines of various tiers of party leadership, party insiders said.

"Maintaining of the status quo creates more factionalism," he said.

See Page 12 Col 7

JCD factions clash at JU

By JU Correspondent

The ousted faction of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) unit of the Jahangirnagar University yesterday afternoon stormed one of the dormitories to regain their hold over the campus.

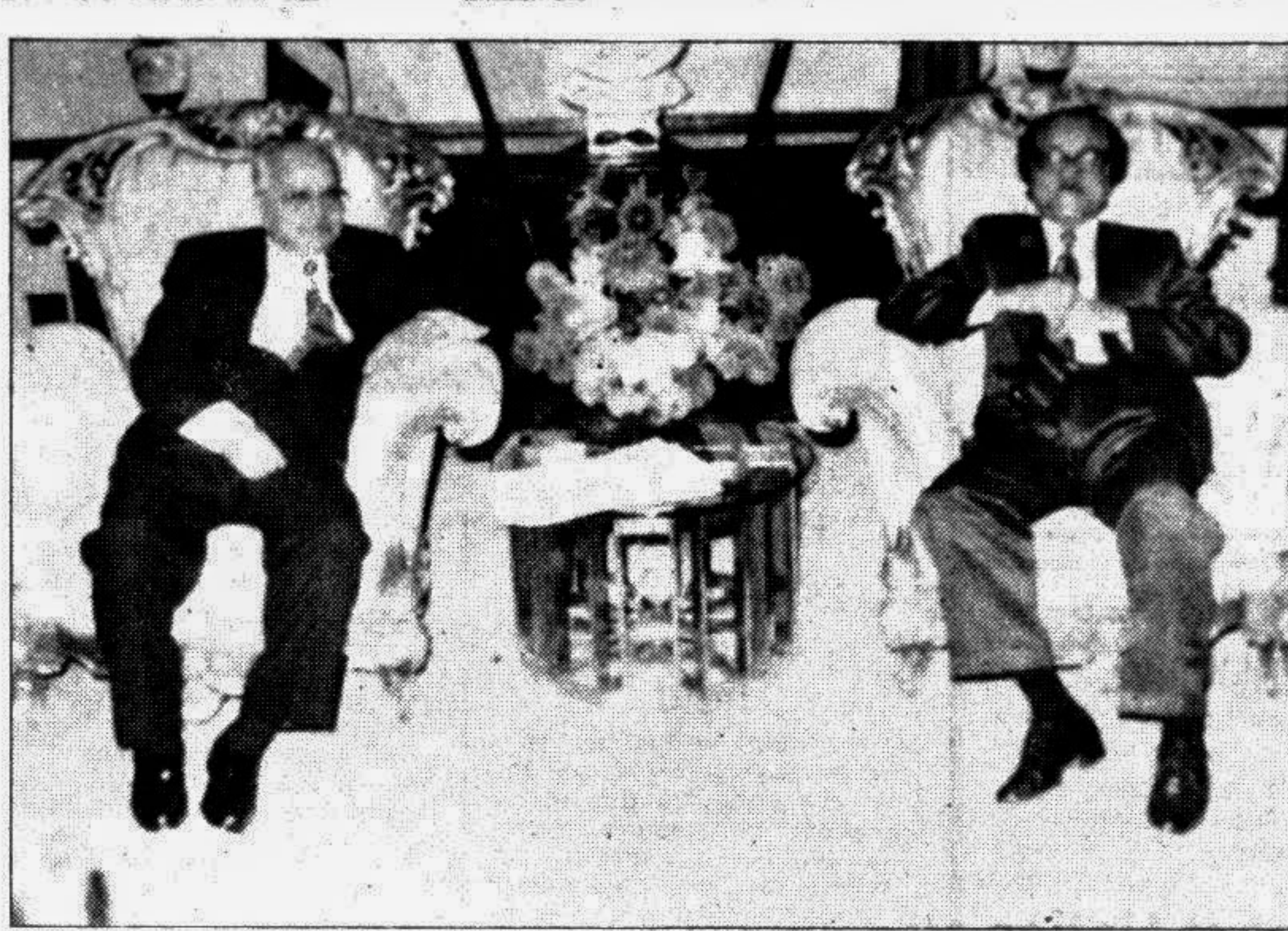
Some 15 armed members of the JCD, led by former general secretary of the Jahangirnagar University Central Students' Union Shamsul Tabriz Mithu, forced into the Al-Beruni Hall and drove away the inmates. The armed gang then took possession of the dormitory entrance and the roof top and made their presence felt by firing into the air intermittently.

Totally taken aback by the abrupt attack, the rival faction, reportedly belonging to the 'local' faction of the JCD, went to the Mir Mosharrar Hossain Hall at the other end of the campus. They also gave vent to their anger by laying a siege to the Dhaka-Aricha Highway for at least three hours. Hundreds of inter-city vehicles were stranded during the siege, witnesses said.

The campus police, according to witnesses, remained indifferent during the incidents.

The faction that moved into the campus yesterday was earlier

See Page 12 Col 6



Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed (R) made a courtesy call on President Abdur Rahman Biswas at the Bangabhaban yesterday. — PID photo

Mahbub defends his role, blames Additional AG

By Staff Correspondent

Supreme Court Bar Association president Kazi Golam Mahbub yesterday slated a reported meeting of the BNP-backed Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Forum which criticised his role in the ongoing furore over the appointment of nine High Court judges.

In an impromptu press briefing at his Supreme Court premises chamber, Advocate Mahbub, who is also a vice-chairman of the ruling BNP, criticised the role of Additional Attorney General Abdul Wadud Khandaker while defending his own role in the present crisis over the appointment of judges.

The crisis deepened when the Supreme Court Bar Association passed a resolution February 5 urging the Chief Justice not to administer oaths to the newly-appointed judges and threatened to boycott their courts if they were sworn in.

Mahbub was responding to a reported extended meeting of the Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Forum which criticised his role "against the spirit of the nationalist party and the forum." Held on Sunday the forum meeting also demanded re-

See Page 12 Col 8

Crisis over new HC judges defused

By Staff Correspondent

The crisis over the appointment of High Court judges appears to have been defused with a compromise solution being agreed upon yesterday, according to well-placed sources.

After hectic parleys among and between the parties concerned, a fresh revised list of nine additional High Court division judges has been finalised.

A series of high-level meetings were held on the day. Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed called on President Abdur Rahman Biswas while a delegation of the Supreme Court Bar Association called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and also on the Chief Justice.

Under the compromise formula worked out, Ruhul Amin, a District and Sessions Judge, has been included in the revised list of appointees. He replaces Barrister Abdul Halim Chaklader, whose inclusion in an earlier revised list Saturday was objected to by the Chief Justice.

As things stand now, two district judges — the other being Hamidul Huq of Barisal — have been substituted in place

of two service-holders appointed originally last Thursday. They were Law Secretary Mirza Assaduzzaman Al-Farooq and Additional Law Secretary Md Hamidullah. These two appointments were objected to by the Chief Justice and the Supreme Court Bar and the ongoing impasse was created.

The SC Bar on February 5 passed a resolution rejecting the appointments and urged the Chief Justice not to administer oaths to the new judges. The association even threatened to boycott the courts of the new Judges if they were sworn-in.

According to government sources, the presidential order on the revised appointments is likely to be completed by Wednesday and the new judges are expected to be sworn-in the same afternoon on the next day.

The Chief Justice called on the President yesterday afternoon. Earlier, a delegation from the Bar Association also called on the Chief Justice to discuss the latest developments.

The team conveyed to the

See Page 12 Col 1

Barapukuria coal extraction accord signed with China

Bangladesh and China yesterday signed an agreement to extract coal from Barapukuria in Dinajpur at a cost of Tk 887.36 crore, reports UNB.

The long-awaited deal was signed between Chinese Consortium and Petrobangla of Bangladesh.

The coal mining, first in Bangladesh, is expected to begin towards the end of next month.

An official announcement said the agreement was signed from the home side by Abdul Jalil Khan, Secretary of the Petrobangla, and Vice President Mei Haou Lien of the China National Machinery Import & Export Corporation (CMC) from the other side.

Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain said the agreement was signed from the home side by Abdul Jalil Khan, Secretary of the Petrobangla, and Vice President Mei Haou Lien of the China National Machinery Import & Export Corporation (CMC) from the other side.

Chinese Ambassador Zhang Xu Jiang, Secretary of the Energy Ministry M Faizur Razzak, Chairman of Petrobangla KCM Abdullah and high officials of ministry concerned were present on the occasion.

Of the total expenses, the CMC will provide Tk 775 crore, equivalent to 12.48 crore US dollars, under suppliers credit and the rest will be contributed by Bangladesh government.

About 10 lakh tons of coal will be extracted from the mine per annum over a period of 64 years.

The mine development project will be implemented within 5 years of commencing the work. However, partial extraction of coal from the mine will start in 3 years.

A 300-mgw power station will be set up for electricity generation by using the Barapukuria coal. About 83 per cent of the coal will be used for power generation and the rest 17 per cent will be used at brickfields and for domestic purpose.

Nearly 3,000 people will be directly involved with the project and another 10,000 be benefited from the mining.

The Bangladesh Geological Survey Bureau (GSB) discovered the coal mine in 1985 only 117 to 506 metre under Barapukuria. Later, the consultant firm, Messrs Wardell Armstrong of UK, conducted the geo-technical feasibility study.

The study detected a reserve of 303 million tons of high quality bituminous coal in 5.25 square km area in six layers.

Campaigning for repolling in 28 centres ends

By Staff Correspondent

Campaigning for repolling in 28 centres of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) elections ended at mid-night last night.

Repolling in 10 wards will take place from 7 am to 3 pm tomorrow.

The Election Commission (EC) had postponed voting in 25 centres and cancelled the results of three others following acts of violence and irregularities during voting on January 30. In these centres 69,964 voters are expected to cast their votes in 130 booths.

The EC in a statement last night reminded the people of the ban on campaigning 48 hours before the completion of the repolling. Anybody found engaged in campaigning after the deadline is liable to punishment of two to seven years imprisonment, the EC warned.

Stepped up vigil in 28 centres for re-polling

By Nazmul Ashraf

The Election Commission (EC) has stepped up additional security measures with a view to holding re-elections in 28 centres under 10 wards of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) tomorrow peacefully.

According to EC sources, at least 80 policemen, backed by BDR personnel, would guard each of the repolling centres where elections were cancelled due to acts of violence during the January 30 DCC polls. The number of policemen is at least 10 times more than that of January 30.

In its efforts to check fresh acts of violence in the troubled centres, the EC would also deploy one First Class magistrate in each centre for summary trial of the offenders while on January 30 such magistrates were on mobile duty, one for several centres.

EC secretary A Z M Shamsul Alam last night met the Home Ministry officials to finalise the security steps for the re-elections.

EC officials told The Daily Star yesterday that preparations for the repolling were nearing completion with only a day left for the occasion. Elaborating the preparations, they said, the Returning Officer had meantime appointed 446 persons to conduct the polls smoothly.

New ballot papers have also been printed and other election materials were ready for supplying to the Presiding Officers who, assisted by the Assistant Presiding Officers and the Polling Officers, would conduct the re-elections.

See Page 12 Col 7

'S Asian nations should evolve mechanism to resolve disputes'

By Staff Correspondent

And response of the other nations of the region.

The Kashmir issue, the Ganges water sharing dispute and proliferations of small weapons resulting in a spate of terrorism also took much of the time of the discussants at the seminar.

In two sessions, 15 papers were presented on various security issues, chaired by Professor Muzaffar Ahmed of the Institute of Business Administration, Dhaka University and Major General M Akbar (Retd), Director General of the Pakistan Institute of Strategic Studies, in the second session.

Giving a broad overview of the South Asian security picture, Prof Lawrence Ziring of the Western Michigan University, USA, noted that a new containment policy was required in South Asia to help democratic experiments against the rise of fascism, and narrow cultural nationalism.

"Peace and cooperation in South Asia influences the cause of accommodation in the connecting regions (Southwest, Central and Southeastern Asia), he said. A new containment must be developed as an open call to join the developed world more intimately with the underdeveloped world — and in ways that are mutually rewarding."

Prof Syed Anwar Hussain observed that Islam has entered as a factor in the security scenario of South Asia.

India appeared to be strategically in a better position than it used to be while

See Page 12 Col 4

Indian diplomat protests remarks on water issue

An Indian diplomat yesterday protested the observation made by a Bangladeshi scholar at an international seminar that India was responsible for human sufferings of the lower riparian Bangladesh due to its unilateral withdrawal of the Ganges water, reports UNB.

"This is not the forum to raise such issues," said Ashok Sajjanhar, Counsellor at the Indian High Commission in Dhaka.

India has its own water management policy within its territory," he said while taking part in the discussion at a seminar at BIUSS yesterday.

Sajjanhar was protesting the remarks of BIUSS Research Fellow Nahid Islam who presented a paper, "Regime of International Watercourse and Transboundary Management of the Ganges River Basin," at the

See Page 12 Col 8

FM's to meet today Ghali asks NATO to okay Bosnia air strikes

BRUSSELS, Feb 7: NATO foreign ministers will meet Tuesday to consider a request by UN chief Boutros Boutros-Ghali to order bombing runs on Bosnian Serb mortar positions around Sarajevo, a Dutch official said Monday, reports AP.

Pressure on NATO and the EU to take action increased after 68 people were killed in a weekend mortar attack on a Sarajevo market. Serbs have denied firing the shell.

The Dutch official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said NATO ambassadors would meet later Monday to prepare for the emergency session.

Boutros-Ghali on Sunday requested NATO approval for air strikes.

But the Europeans were clearly divided on the issue.

At the start of Monday's EU meeting, French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe called on his European partners to set a deadline for Bosnian Serbs to withdraw artillery from the hills overlooking Sarajevo or face air strikes.

"Yugoslavia is a test of our honour and even a test of the European Union," Juppe said during the televised opening session of the ministers meeting. "The siege of Sarajevo has to be lifted."

Dutch Foreign Minister Peter Kooijmans told his colleagues, "The eyes of the world are focused on Brussels today. People will say, 'How can you tolerate this without showing some action?'"

Cabinet amends Seed Ord '77, SEC Act '93

The cabinet has approved the amendment to the Seed Ordinance-1977 proposed by the Ministry of Agriculture, reports BSS.

The approval was given yesterday at the regular weekly meeting of the cabinet held at Bangabhaban with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair.

The cabinet also approved the proposal of the Ministry of Finance to amend the Securities and Exchange Commission Act-1993.

Ministers, State Ministers-in-Charge of different ministries and divisions attended the meeting. Cabinet Secretary, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister and secretaries concerned were present.

Hasina returns from US

Awami League president and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina returned home yesterday after a week-long visit to the United States and UK, reports UNB.

Hasina left Dhaka for Washington on February 1 to attend the National Breakfast Prayer at the invitation of US Congressional Committee.

At the Breakfast Prayer on February 3, the Opposition leader met US President Bill Clinton, First Lady Hillary Clinton, Vice-President Al Gore, Mrs. Al Gore, members of the US Congress and leaders of different countries.

See Page 12 Col 3

Scrutinised list of Chakmas handed over

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Feb 7: A four-member Bangladesh team led by the Deputy Commissioner of Khagrachhari district left for Tripura, India this morning to hand over the scrutinised list of Chakma refugees.

In the list about 350 out of 400 families submitted by the Indian team Thursday were accepted for repatriation from February 15.

The Bangladesh team is expected to receive another list of the refugees today from the Indian side for scrutiny. The team is due to return today.

Meanwhile, the Khagrachhari district administration imposed Section 144 in all its eight thanas with effect from February 4 for ensuring a peaceful situation during the repatriation.

Lalbagh violence: One more held

By Staff Correspondent

Police yesterday arrested another person from Nawabganj bazar for his alleged involvement in the post-polls violence on January 31 which left six people dead.

Both Yusuf, 22, arrested yesterday and Abdur Razzak a day before were remanded to the city's Detective Branch (DB). Both of them were produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate in Dhaka yesterday.

Police arrested 12 people so far, but failed to arrest Alhaj Abdul Aziz, the main accused and his brother Shaheen until yesterday.

Besides Yusuf and Razzak, Aziz's father — Alhaj Abdul Majid, 66, — is also in the DB custody for interrogation. His police remand is due to end today.

My turn to fulfil pledges: Hanif

By DU Correspondent

The mayor-elect of the Dhaka City Corporation, Md Hanif, yesterday underlined the need for united efforts of the ruling BNP and other political parties to build up the country.

He was addressing a campaign meeting on the Dhaka University campus ahead of the repolling in 28 centres of the DCC polls tomorrow.

The pro-Awami League Chhatra League (M-L) arranged the meeting for Khwaja Habibullah, the AL commissioner candidate for Ward 57, and for Hanif.

"The citizens of Dhaka city have given me more than I had expected," Hanif said adding "Now it is my turn to fulfil the pledges I made to them."

The meeting held in front of the Arts Faculty building of

See Page 12 Col 6