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### Announcement

As part of commemoration of the Ekushey we devote, from February 10 to 22, our Dhaka Day by Day to subjects related to the great occasion.  
 — Editor

### NEWS BRIEFS

#### SPGR meets today

A general meeting of the Stranded Pakistanis' General Repatriation Committee (EJAZ) will be held tomorrow at the Mohammadpur bahu math, Babar Road, in the city at 3 pm. The committee has requested the concerned quarters to send five representatives each from different regions including Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Khalsipur, Syedpur, Rangpur and Iswardi, reports BSS.

#### Sharma becomes SAIC Chairman

Dr R D Sharma, Director, Publication and Information of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, has been elected the new Chairman of the SAARC Agricultural Information Centre (SAIC), a SAIC press release said in Dhaka yesterday. The new Chairman, who succeeded Karma Tashi of Bhutan, while presiding over the eight meeting of the SAIC, said that India would provide all help to turn the SAIC into a dynamic organisation, reports BSS.

#### Kirit Khan enthralled audience

Famous Indian star Kirit Khan enthralled an audience for nearly two hours at a recital session in the city yesterday evening. Kirit Khan, son of sarod maestro Bahadur Hossain Khan and a grandson of Ustad Alauddin Khan, is now on a visit to Bangladesh. The gathering at the Indian Cultural Centre was kept spell bound for hours when young Kirit Khan presented his unique recital. Manzurul Hossain Khan, a young Bangladeshi, played the tabla, reports BSS.

## Hanif consolidates lead in repolling

By Staff Correspondent

The Awami League's mayoral nominee Mohammad Hanif further consolidated his lead in the re-polling in 25 centres of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) held yesterday.

According to the latest results available from the Election Commission (EC), Mohammad Hanif bagged 18,041 votes while the BNP's mayoral candidate Mirza Abbas received 7959 votes in the 25 centres.

The Jatiya Party nominee Col (Retd) M A Malek secured 1320 votes while the Jamaat-e-

Islami candidate A T M Azharul Islam bagged 694. Manzurul Ahsan Khan candidate of the Left-leaning parties, received 162 votes.

With the results of the re-polling in 25 centres yesterday, the Awami League's mayoral nominee Mohammad Hanif has polled 4,40,277 votes in 734 out of 737 centres of the Dhaka City Corporation elections while his nearest rival Mirza Abbas of the BNP has secured 3,52,200 votes.

The latest unofficial results of the 734 centres show that Col. (Retd) Abdul Malek has bagged 61,773 votes while ATM Azharul Islam 35,451 and Manzurul Ahsan Khan 5,196 votes.

Polling in 28 centres was postponed following violence and irregularities in the January 30 DCC elections.

Re-elections in three other centres at the Dhaka University was again postponed by a court order on Tuesday.

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BDR personnel keep vigil as voting progresses peacefully during the re-polling at the Siddiq Bazar Community Centre in the city yesterday.

## 9 elected ward commissioners

By Staff Correspondent

The Awami League candidates for commissioner posts have won in four wards while the BNP's in two and the independent ones in three other wards, according to unofficial results yesterday.

The nine elected ward commissioners are: Mohsin of Ward No 26 (Awami League), Sheikh Bazur Rahman of Ward No 46 (AL), Abdus Sattar Bhuiyan of Ward No 48 (AL), Haji Mohammad Alem of Ward No 62 (AL), Mosharraf Hossain of Ward No 60 (BNP), Haji Shahabuddin of Ward No 90 (BNP), Haji Mohammad Selim of Ward No 65 (Independent), Mir Samir of Ward No 70 (Independent) and Haji Abdur Rahim of Ward No 78 (Independent).

## Saifur reviews reforms with donors today

By A Special Correspondent

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman will meet donor representatives in Dhaka today. The meeting will also be attended by an IMF mission currently in the city.

This is the first meeting that Rahman will have with the representatives of the Aid Consortium members since the recent city corporation elections where the BNP had suffered a stunning setback. Among other things, the economic reform programmes of the Finance Minister have been blamed by a section of BNP leaders for the loss of support in Dhaka and Chittagong.

The meeting, which was

planned months earlier, according to a diplomatic source, has been called to discuss the very reform programme that many blamed for the city corporations election debacle. A number of aid officials will try to assess whether this criticism of the reform programme has caused the government's commitment to reforms to weaken.

The World Bank, which usually takes the leading role in discussions in such forums, has already made an assessment on behalf of the Consortium Members. The World Bank's assessment is that although the government

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## Appointment of judges dominates JS time

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad (JS) yesterday witnessed an 85-minute unscheduled debate on the government's controversial appointment of nine High Court Judges.

After the debate, in which MPs from both Treasury and Opposition benches took part, the Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali said the JS Advisory Committee should decide whether any discussion on the issue was necessary or not in the changed circumstances.

The observation from the Speaker came at 9 pm. But, by this time, 15 legislators, belonging to both Treasury and Opposition benches, had already spoken on the issue.

Earlier, while disposing of identical notices alleging government interference with the judiciary by appointing judges without consultation with the Chief Justice, the Speaker

sought the opinions of senior parliamentarians on whether discussion on the matter was necessary.

But while giving their opinions sought by the Speaker, the legislators one by one joined in a long and unscheduled debate on the subject.

Tofael Ahmed of the Awami League (AL), arguing in favour of holding a debate, alleged that the government was interfering with the country's judiciary by appointing its own men as judges.

At this point, Deputy Leader of the House Professor A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury took the floor to assert that no particular provision of the Constitution had been violated with the appointments of judges without consultation with the Chief Justice. He, however, admitted that a convention

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## CJ to administer oaths to new judges today

By Staff Correspondent

The President yesterday announced fresh appointments of nine additional judges of the High Court division of the Supreme Court in consultation with the Chief Justice, cancelling the earlier notification made on February 3, according to a press release signed by the Registrar of the Supreme Court.

Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed is, due to administer the oaths of office to the new additional judges today at 10:30 am at his office chamber.

The new appointments end the week-long controversy centering around consultation

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## No alternative to nationalist forces: Khaleda

Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia last night said there was no alternative to the nationalist forces for the development of the country, reports BSS.

Begum Zia was addressing hundreds of political activists from different parties of Bhairab, who joined the BNP at the Sugandha, LGRD Minister and BNP Secretary General Barrister Abdus Salam Talukdar, Bhairab thana BNP general secretary Abdus Sattar and, on behalf of the newly joined political activists, Bhairab Poursabha Chairman Monirul Huq Khaleda and former chairman of Bhairab Upazila Haji Mohammad Kalu Mia also spoke.

Describing the villages as the focal point of the development strategy of the BNP government, the Prime Minister said her government had put in relentless efforts to develop the villages for the uplift of the

She urged the newly joined leaders and workers to strengthen the hands of the BNP by spreading the political philosophy and programmes of the BNP and said the BNP had been pursuing a pro-people and development-oriented nationalistic policies.

## Serbs to withdraw arms NATO agrees to use threat of air strikes

BRUSSELS, Feb 9: NATO agreed today to threaten Bosnian Serb forces with air strikes unless they withdraw heavy weapons from around Sarajevo within a maximum of 10 days, alliance sources told Reuters.

The sources said NATO ambassadors were still discussing whether the deadline should be seven or 10 days and whether to describe the threat publicly as an ultimatum.

"But there is now agreement in principle that a deadline will be set, beyond which air strikes will be used," said one alliance source.

AP adds: Bosnian Serbs, facing possible NATO air strikes, agreed Wednesday to withdraw heavy weaponry from around Sarajevo and put it under UN monitoring, the UN commander said.

## ECNEC okays Tk 279cr gas pipeline project

The Executive Committee (ECNEC) of the National Council (NC) at a meeting yesterday approved the Ashuganj-Bakhrabad Gas Pipeline Project at a cost of Tk 279 crore with a foreign exchange component of Tk 185 crore, reports UNB.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman chaired the meeting, held at the cabinet room.

The meeting also approved an inter-ministerial recommendation to vest more administrative and financial powers to the ministries, divisions, departments, organisations and project directors for rapid implementation of the development projects.

This will notably accelerate the implementation process of projects, the meeting observed.

Under the gas project, 59 kilometre-long pipeline will be constructed from Ashuganj to Bakhrabad to remit more gas from Sylhet area to meet the increasing demand in Bakhrabad area. The work is expected to be completed in 1997, official sources said.

## Gunshots, blasts rend JU campus

By JU Correspondent

Acts of violence on the Jahangirnagar University campus continued for the third consecutive day yesterday. There were gunshots and explosions despite the presence of police, forcing many students to leave the campus.

The ousted faction of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, JU unit, continued its occupation of the Al-Beruni Hall and made its presence felt with frequent firings. On Monday afternoon, a group of the JCD men had stormed the hall and forced their rivals out.

In the face of continuing terrorism, the academic and administrative activities of the university have virtually collapsed. No classes were held yesterday and the university buses remained in the garage. All examinations of the university have been postponed.

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## NBR withdraws notification

Star Report

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) yesterday ordered immediate withdrawal of a controversial notification to a section of the regular taxpayers seeking details about their miscellaneous expenditures on birthdays, anniversaries and other such occasions, according to a highly-placed source yesterday.

"The NBR has decided to withdraw that notification immediately," said the source.

The recent notification created resentment among the regular taxpayers who received it and was seen as a glaring example of harassment by tax officials.

An over-enthusiastic deputy income tax commissioner issued the obnoxious notification on his own without any approval from anybody. The notification asked the taxpayers to furnish information about the expenditures relating to medical treatment, birthdays, anniversaries, festivals and educational expenses of their wards.

The concerned tax official has been asked to provide an explanation for his unauthorised action, the source noted.

He said that the NBR is soon going to open a 'complaint cell', where taxpayers can lodge complaints if they are harassed by tax officials. Details of the cell, along with contact telephone numbers, would be published in newspapers through advertisements soon.

## Reforms not the cause for polls debacle, says Saifur

By S Y Bakht

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday categorically denied that the economic issue was a factor in the recently concluded city corporation polls and charged that certain quarters were trying to slow down the ongoing economic reform process by using it as a scapegoat.

"It was a local election and even until the last day of the campaign no one, including from the Opposition, ever raised economic issues as a campaign issue," the minister argued in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star.

Some people, he said, are wrongly trying to attribute the BNP's defeat in the Dhaka and Chittagong City Corporation elections to the economic re-

form programmes of the country. "This is absolutely wrong, erroneous and misconceived."

The Finance Minister vowed to continue with the reform process.

"Reform is an inevitable process in today's world and there is no turning back from

The full transcript of the interview will be published on Saturday

if for us. We have excellent macro-economic fundamentals and this is precisely the time to benefit from the reforms because the painful period is over."

During the hour-long interview at his Secretariat chamber, Rahman dwelt at length

on his views about the reasons behind the ruling party's recent electoral debacle and responded to criticisms that he had pushed the reforms too quickly leading to economic hardships.

Replying to a question about harassment of some regular taxpayers, he announced the immediate withdrawal of all such irregular and counter-productive measures, which he claimed were not authorised.

He said the economic issue was not even raised before the polls results were announced. "If the economic issue was the cause (of the defeat) then why did we win in Khulna, which is an industrial belt? The economic issue was never

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## Ex-Indian FM I K Gujral says

## Dhaka, Delhi must foster a spirit of accommodation

By M Anwarul Haq

and do not create a better future for us."

Gujral viewed that there has been a marked absence of political will to improve relations by successive governments in India, but efforts have been made to break the impasse

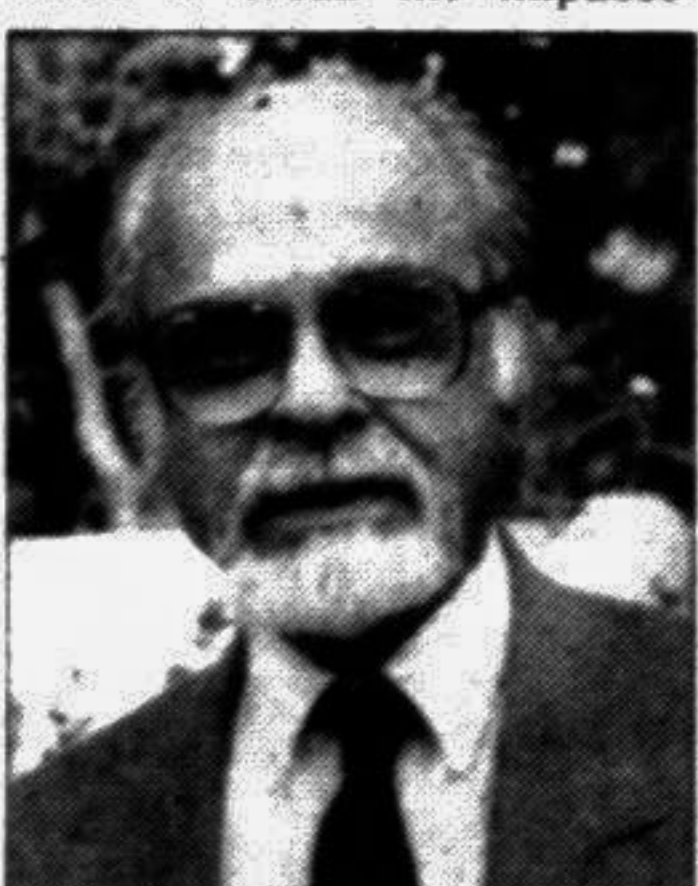
all areas.

When asked why Bangladesh should be deprived of its rightful share of the Ganges water, Gujral said, the reality is that, neither country has sufficient water for running industry, agricultural production or even for drinking purpose. Although there is scope for a more 'beneficial sharing arrangement, the stress must be on augmentation," he insisted.

I K Gujral, who did a long stint as Information Minister and served in several other positions under Indira Gandhi and was his country's Ambassador to Moscow and later quit the Congress with V P Singh to become the External Affairs Minister, hinted that India may be more flexible in accommodating Bangladesh's water needs if Dhaka made more trade concessions and allowed transit facilities, and also the use of the Chittagong port.

According to him, the Chittagong port was being utilised only 50 percent. "What is the harm if you allow the use of Chittagong port for transit of our goods to eastern India. You will definitely be benefited by

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I K Gujral whenever non-Congress governments had taken over the administration in New Delhi.

In order to improve relations and bring it to a mutually beneficial level Gujral suggested that India and Bangladesh should review the entire gamut of bilateral relations and examine sufficiently



The Central Shaheed Minar in the city is being given a face-lift before The Shaheed Day on February 21. — Star photo