

Inside Today

Article

Political Developments: The Mayoral Elections
by Ahmad Ahsan
Page 4

International

PLO rejects major Israeli package of concessions



Khasbulatov accuses Yeltsin of staging coup
Page 5

Business

Daily Star Round Table: Pro-poor planning in Bangladesh — how seriously are we pursuing it?
Delhi cuts taxes, tariffs in budget
Pages 6, 7

Supplement

Special supplement on Proshika
Pages 8, 9

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day



Shopping Mall with Tempting Offers
Page 3

NEWS BRIEFS

PM's donation

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday donated Taka 25 thousand each as financial assistance to the father of Shaheed Nur Hossain and wife of Shaheed rikshawpuller Abdul Awal. Nur and Awal were killed during the anti-autocracy movement, reports BSS.

10 companies to be awarded today

The country's ten top companies will be awarded today in recognition of their performance. Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is expected to distribute awards among the companies at a function at Osmany Memorial Hall at 10:30 am. Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman will attend as special guest while DSE Chairman Khurshid Alam will preside. Reports UNB.

WB team meets Moyeen Khan

State Minister for Planning Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan has said that decentralisation at local level and participation of people from different social strata would be ensured in preparing future plan. He said this while he was meeting with a World Bank delegation led by its visiting Director Ms Ann Hamilton, according to an official handout in Dhaka yesterday, reports BSS.

Heroin seized

COX'S BAZAR, Mar 1: A special squad of the 37 battalion of Bangladesh Rifles in a raid recovered one kilogram of heroin worth about Taka one crore from a Chittagong bound bus at Ramu check post today, reports BSS.

Sehri, Iftar timings

Rmdn	Mar	Sehri	Iftar
18	2*	—	6:05 pm
19	3	5:00 am	6:06 pm
20	4	4:59 am	6:06 pm

Pandemonium in Parliament Opposition stages walkout over Huda's comment

By Staff Correspondent

The Parliament yesterday witnessed a total pandemonium following a comment of Information Minister Nazmul Huda, which the opposition members termed as 'an insult to their religious feelings'.

The entire opposition led by Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina staged a walkout in protest against Huda's speech in which he remarked with an oblique reference to the opposition members that "They have suddenly become Muslims."

The Information Minister, however, immediately 'regretted and withdrew' his comment while Deputy Speaker

Humayun Khan Panni expunged the 'opening parts' of the speech to pacify the opposition but the opposition demanded an 'unconditional apology' on the floor from Huda.

Immediately after Huda's comment, several opposition members started shouting and slamming files on the table, plunging the House into a total chaos. Some treasury bench members also shouted back.

An apparently helpless Deputy Speaker gave the floor to Deputy Leader of the House Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury who said amid uproar that the Information Minister had already withdrawn his comment.

Before the pandemonium, the House was discussing the possibility of fixing a date for general discussion to condemn the Hebron carnage in which more than 60 Palestinians were killed and many others injured.

Later, at a press briefing opposition leader of the House Sheikh Hasina, on behalf of the combined opposition, said they would not take part in the session unless the information minister apologises. In a separate press conference Deputy Leader of the House Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury said withdrawal of one's speech tantamounts to apology and See Page 12 Col 1

Opposition demands an unconditional apology

By Staff Correspondent

The leaders of the opposition parties in parliament yesterday said it would be difficult for them to return to the House unless the Information Minister made an unconditional apology for the 'derogatory remarks' he had made about them.

The opposition leaders were speaking at a joint press briefing at the Jatiya Sangsad chamber of the Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina.

Sheikh Hasina strongly condemned Huda's comments and said it would be difficult for them to go back to the House unless Nazmul Huda made an 'unqualified apology'. She, however, said the opposition leaders would meet this morning to evaluate the situation.

The Leader of the Opposition said Huda's comments amounted to expressing sympathy for the Jews. We do not know the reason behind the Information Minister's affection for the Jews, she added.

Speaking about her party's sympathy for the Islamic Ummah, Hasina told newsmen that it was the Mujib Government which had joined the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), set up the Islamic Foundation and the Madrasa Board and banned alcohol and gambling in the country.

Accusing Huda of 'always creating problems' in the See Page 12 Col 1

Salam criticises Hasina

BNP Secretary General and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder yesterday strongly condemned baseless charges of corruption made by the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina against ministers and the government, reports BSS.

In a statement, Salam Talukder said that the Leader of the Opposition in her press briefing on Monday at the Jatiya Sangsad had not only described the government as corrupt but went to the extent of bringing false allegations against even the Prime Minister.

Barrister Talukder said the Leader of the Opposition by making such untrue and misleading statements was seeking to gain cheap popularity.

The BNP Secretary General See Page 12 Col 1

Remarks were withdrawn, expunged: B Chy

Deputy Leader of Parliament Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday expressed the hope that the opposition would return to the House by upholding democratic traditions and spirit, reports BSS.

Briefing newsmen at his Sangsad Bhaban office, the Deputy Leader of the House said unpleasant incidents in Parliaments all over the world were not uncommon and those were being solved by expressing regrets and expunging relevant words or comments.

He said if anybody was hurt due to certain comments during the discussion in the House yesterday, it was immediately regretted and the remarks were withdrawn. The Deputy Speaker who was in the chair also expunged the relevant portion from the proceedings, he added.

Prof Chowdhury said the present Parliament elected through free and fair elections was the symbol of hopes and aspirations of the people. With a view to making this Parliament effective, the government was always accommodative, he said and pointed out that at the same time the opposition should behave responsibly.

The Deputy Leader said he had made it clear in the House that the treasury bench was willing to discuss the Hebron massacre and adopt resolution condemning the incident once again. He hoped that the opposition would return to the House and make their contributions in this regard.

He said in parliamentary See Page 12 Col 6

'Sometimes they embarrass us'

By Staff Correspondent

A ruling party MP yesterday said in Parliament that the speeches of some ministers sometimes embarrassed the treasury bench.

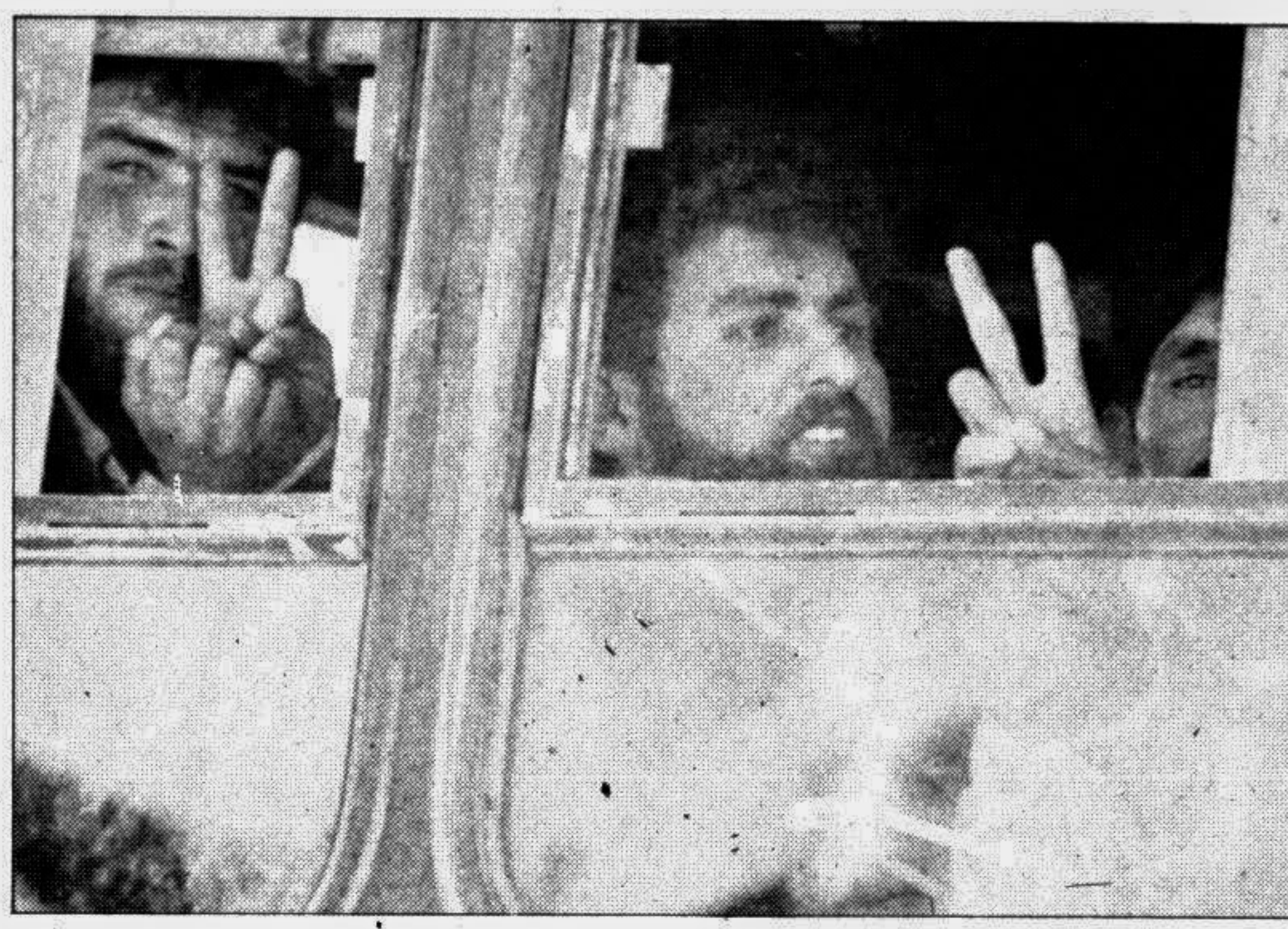
"Possibly the Information Minister failed to put his words correctly but some of the comments of ministers sometimes embarrass us," Ziaur Rahman Zia said.

His observation came following a comment of the Information Minister which triggered an uproar in the House.

"They should be cautious in passing comments," he said without elaborating.

Later, at a press briefing, Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury said in reply to a question "These should be discussed in the party forum but not in the House."

See Page 12 Col 6



Handcuffed Palestinian prisoners flash V-signs behind the window of the Israeli prison van on their way to freedom in Ramallah in the West Bank yesterday. — AFP photo

Israel frees 500 Palestinians

JERUSALEM, Mar 1: Israel released about 500 Palestinians today in a bid to calm the fury ignited by the Hebron massacre, but Palestinians warned that much more will be needed before Middle East peace talks resume, reports AFP.

Military officials said there would be further releases Wednesday and a total of up to 500 by the end of the week.

However, former Palestinian spokesman Haneen Ashrawi dismissed the gesture as window-dressing when more than 10,000 Palestinians are in Israeli jails.

A dozen army buses loaded with Palestinians left the Ketzio military prison in the Negev desert during the morning heading for the territories.

The officials said none of See Page 12 Col 4

Flat VAT rates for small, service sector units

By Sohail Manzur

The government has decided to fix flat rates of the Value Added Tax (VAT) for the enterprises of services sector and small scale manufacturing sector instead of charging 15 per cent of their total value addition, according to official sources.

Of the enterprises of the manufacturing sector, those who have to pay the turn over tax or those who have an annual sales of up to Tk 7.5 lakh, would be brought under the new system of VAT collection.

The reason for introducing the new system, as stated by some NBR officials, is to stop corrupt practices of the VAT officials while evaluating the value addition.

According to sources, the

small traders are often subjected to harassment by the VAT officials since most of them do not maintain the papers of their sales or profit and loss accounts properly. The VAT collectors, taking advantage of the situation, have been making money illegally, thereby depriving the government of a huge amount of revenue, the sources pointed out.

The existing VAT rules will, however, be applied more strictly to ensure proper collection from the other large scale industrial units.

The new system of VAT collection was introduced for the sweetmeat producers hotels and restaurants and, according to sources, this has almost See Page 12 Col 7

Order restricting private diesel import rejected

By Staff Correspondent

A division bench of the High Court Division yesterday declared illegal a government order withholding the discharge of a consignment of diesel oil imported by a private firm and ordered the immediate release of the cargo.

The bench comprising Justice Ismailuddin Sarker and Justice Hamidul Huq, gave the judgement on a writ petition filed by QC Petroleum Ltd challenging the government order issued on January 5.

The lawyers for the petitioner said the government order was illegal as the current import policy excluded such petroleum products from the control list making the item freely importable.

See Page 12 Col 3

Muggers stab 2 traffic police

By Staff Correspondent

Muggers stabbed two traffic police constables near the Gulistan zero-point before being arrested by a Detective Branch (DB) team following a chase yesterday morning.

Pursued by the DB men, three muggers who were speeding away by an autorickshaw stabbed the constables when tried to halt the vehicle around 7 in the morning.

Constables Bakiar Rahman and Nirmal Kumar Biswas were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). The later, who suffered stab injuries on the abdomen, was in the intensive care unit (ICU) till filing of this report last night. Doctors stated his condition to be serious.

The three-member DB team led by Sub-Inspector Mizanur See Page 12 Col 3

SC rejects appeal for stay of repolling

By Staff Correspondent

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court has rejected the petition for stay of the repolling in the three centres of the Dhaka City Corporation scheduled to be held tomorrow.

Abul Ahsan Talukder, a commissioner candidate of Ward No 57 moved a provi-

sional petition for stay of repoll in the three centres.

The Appellate Division, comprising five judges, including the Chief Justice in the chair, summarily rejected the petition after hearing the matter.

Advocate Khandaker See Page 12 Col 8

Dhaka appreciates NATO air strikes on Serbs

Bangladesh appreciates the NATO air strikes under UN resolution on the Serbian aggressors in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

American fighters on Monday shot down four Serbian planes that defied warning signals and violated UN no-fly zone in Bosnia.

"Appropriate action has been taken ultimately to implement the UN decisions," Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman told UNB yesterday.

He said: "Belligerent countries should be dealt with properly under the universal norms."

In this context, Mostafiz reiterated Dhaka's resolute stand on the predominantly Muslim republic of the former Yugoslav federation.

"Bangladesh stands for independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina," he added.

Prokrichi rejects review body on 'anomalies'

By Staff Correspondent

The leaders of the Prokrichi-BCS Central Action Council have rejected the government's reported decision to form a high-power committee to review the demands of different cadres and remove service anomalies.

At a meeting in the city yesterday, the Prokrichi leaders observed that the appointment of a former minister and cabinet secretary of the ousted government to head the committee for reviewing the decisions of a democratic government was 'disgraceful'.

"It is also derogatory and See Page 12 Col 3

Fire in garments factory: 50 hurt

By Staff Correspondent

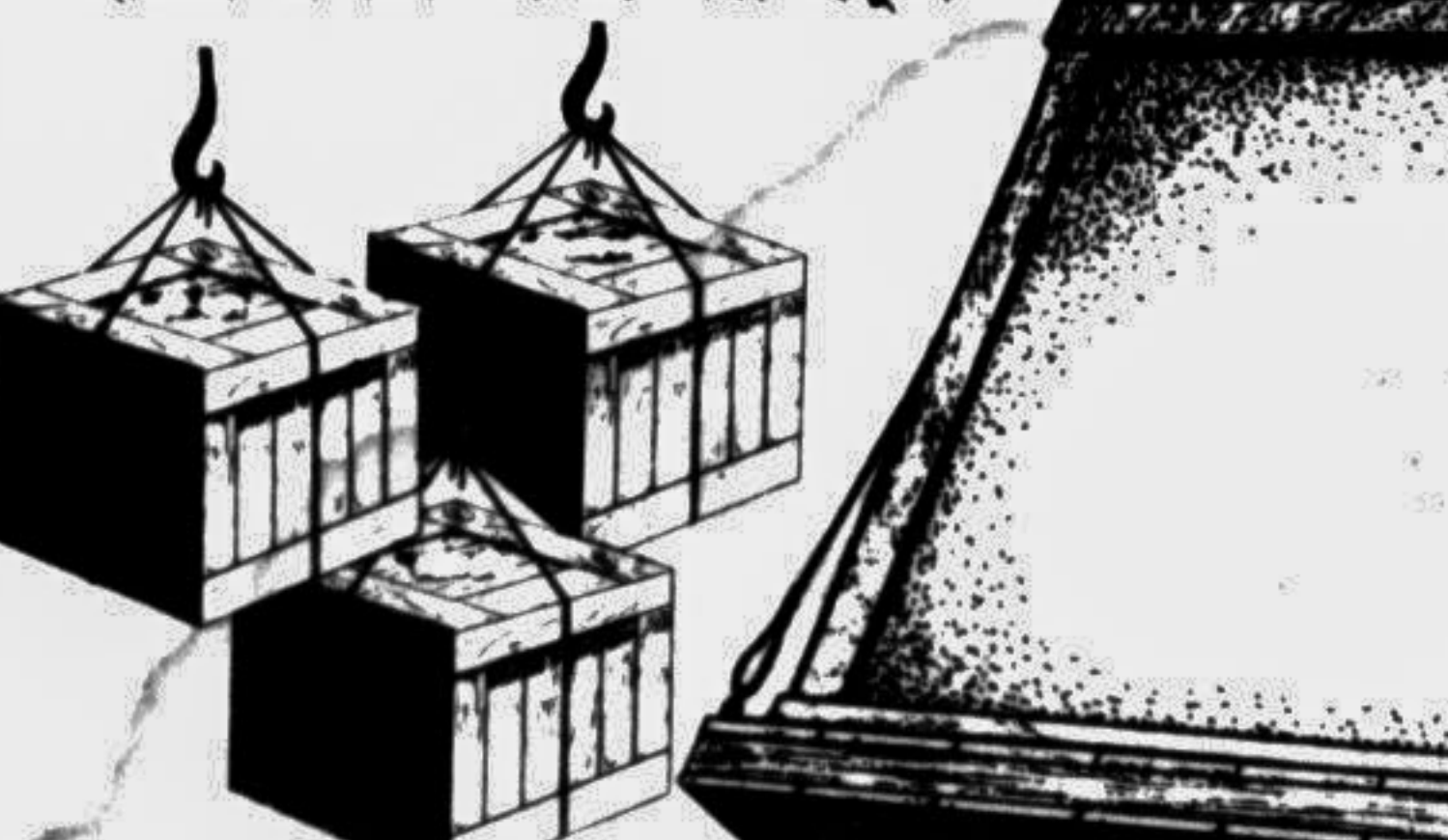
At least 50 garments workers, mostly women, were injured in a stampede when they ran for safety after a fire broke out in the factory at Purana Paltan in the city yesterday afternoon.

Many of the panic-stricken workers of the Miti Apparels even jumped from the first or second floor of the building.

The fire, that reportedly originated from an electric short circuit, on the fourth floor however, had died down before the firemen arrived.

আপনি কি রপ্তানী বাণিজ্যে আগ্রহী?

দেশব্যাপী জনতা ব্যাংকের ৪৫টি অনুমোদিত শাখার (A D Branch) মাধ্যমে রপ্তানী/ আমদানী বাণিজ্য পরিচালিত হয়। রপ্তানী ব্যবসা সুষ্ঠুভাবে সম্পাদনে সহজ শর্তে এবং স্বল্পতম সময়ে প্রচলিত ও অপ্রচলিত পণ্যের বিপরীতে রপ্তানী ঋণ সহায়তা প্রদানে আমরা সদা প্রস্তুত।



রপ্তানী কার্যক্রমে কোন জটিলতা দেখা দিলে নিম্নলিখিত নির্বাহীদের সাথে সরাসরি যোগাযোগ করুন:

প্রধান কার্যালয়	চট্টগ্রাম	পুলনা	সিলেট
জনাব শওকত রহমান মহাব্যবস্থাপক ফোন: ২৩১২১৬	জনাব মোঃ হাবিল হোসেন মহাব্যবস্থাপক ফোন: ৫০১৯৫৪ ৫০১৭০৫	জনাব সুলতান নাসির উদ্দিন উপ-মহাব্যবস্থাপক ফোন: ২৪৯৩৭ ২৪৯১০	জনাব আবুল হাফিজ উপ-মহাব্যবস্থাপক ফোন: ৪৯০৬ ৩৪১০

জনাব টি ইউ এম করিমদাদ
উপ-মহাব্যবস্থাপক
ফোন: ২৪৭৪৬৫

জনাব এম. ইয়াহিয়া খান
উপ-মহাব্যবস্থাপক
ফোন: ২২০৭৪৫

এ ছাড়া, বিশেষ প্রয়োজনে যোগাযোগ করুন—
ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক
ফোন: ২৩২০৭৮

আপনার রপ্তানী সংক্রান্ত সমস্যা আমাদের জানান। আমরা সমাধানে সচেষ্ট।

জনতা ব্যাংক
দেশের সেবার নিয়ন্ত্রিত

The Daily Star Round-Table The poor can generate investment

By Staff Correspondent

The country's policy planners and development workers yesterday said the poor are highly efficient and capable of generating investment.

However, they stressed, the poor should have access to resources to help them eliminate their poverty.

These observations came at a Round Table on Pro-poor Planning organised by The Daily Star at a local hotel.

The discussion at the Round Table centred round the notions that growth should be the main focus for poverty alleviation as pursued by the World Bank and that the problem of poverty should be solved to ensure the growth of the economy.

The round-table on "Pro-

poor Planning in Bangladesh: How Important it is and How Seriously are We Pursuing it", moderated by The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam, was participated by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, Matia Chowdhury MP, Rashed Khan Menon MP, Owaise Sadaat of the World Bank, Dr SK

Detailed Story on Page 6

Maqsood Ali of the Planning Commission, Khushi Kabir of the ADAB and other representatives of different national and international development agencies.

The participants spoke of the need for injecting more funds into the social services sectors for eradication of poverty, instead of taking

piecemeal relief programmes. The Finance Minister said, the government had already reallocated money from delinquent sectors to health, education and other social sectors.

"We believe that maximum output with minimum investment is the best way to achieve growth. We are spending more for infrastructure development because people will be getting jobs," Saifur said. "There is no alternative to creating job opportunities for the people to get rid of poverty," he added.

He also stressed the need for spending in the areas which will go to the vulnerable groups.

"Unless you have resources, you cannot go for larger in See Page 12 Col 6

Hopes run high among tribal returnees

From Nurul Alam

KHAGRACHHARI, Mar 1: I want to return to teaching, said 34-year-old Kanti Lal Chakma who started his life anew at his home at Kukichhara village of Khagrachhari hill district.

Kanti has started rebuilding his house on a hill-top with the corrugated iron sheets and other building materials received as assistance from the government immediately on his return to Bangladesh from Tripura in India where he, along with 50 thousand others like him had the better expe-

riences of camp life.

Kanti, who is among the 1849 Bangladeshi tribal refugees from 379 families to return voluntarily in the first batch under a negotiated agreement between Dhaka and New Delhi, has a six-member family.

He said "Shantibahini men forced us to get across the border in 1989 along with 200 others from here as our house was near an army camp. When Shantibahini men used to come here and attack the army camp, a heavy exchange of fire

frequently took place over our house."

"Before leaving for camps in India, I worked here as a teacher in a local high school and I lived pretty affluently," said Kanti in a mood of expectation to get back his job for leading a normal life as before. After his return, he is now living with his parents.

Kanti, standing in front of his under-construction house, told this correspondent that he was no more interested to flee home again.

"I will live and die here," he

said with determination.

Kanti said, his father Sharat Chandra Chakma 55, along with his mother and a sister, earlier had come back secretly from the Indian camp dodging the eyes of the security men in 1990.

When asked, Sharat, who was standing beside, said "I came back only after staying for 10 months as I have buffalo and landed property here. I am to look after those."

"But I feel jealous of the refugees who were repatriated See Page 12 Col 4