

Opposition walkout

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urged the opposition to attend the session.

Earlier, AL Whip Abul Hassan Chowdhury, rising on a point of order at around 12:25 said that the Bangladeshi Parliament should discuss the Hebron killing and adopt a resolution condemning the massacre in the mosque.

He alleged that the government failed to react properly. Even our permanent Representative to the United Nations did not issue any statement condemning the incident.

In reply the deputy leader of the House said that Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia had condemned and protested immediately after the incident.

Parliament also adopted a condolence resolution following the incident, he said adding that, nevertheless, the treasury bench is ready for a general discussion.

Opposition Chief Whip Mohammad Nasim, Jamaat's parliamentary party chief Matiur Rahman Nizami, Deputy Opposition Leader Abdus Samad Azad, Jatiya Party's Moudud Ahmed and treasury bench Acting Chief Whip Mahbubul Alam Tara also spoke on the issue and apparently reached a decision about the discussion.

But as soon as Nazmul Huda started his speech saying "I am enjoying their speech, they are shedding crocodile tears, suddenly they all have become Muslims", the opposition members stood up and started protesting his remarks.

Some of the members from the AL and the Jatiya Party slammed files on the table.

Huda then tried to clarify his statement and said "I said that suddenly we have become Muslims". His voice drowned in the din inside the house.

Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury then urged the chair to expunge the controversial parts of Huda's speech but the opposition members continued the clamour.

Taking the floor Sheikh Hasina said that Nazmul Huda had hurt our feelings by taunting our religious beliefs.

"Unless he apologises we can not stay in the House," she said. Again the Information Minister switched on his microphone and said "If one suddenly starts articulating Bisnullah too often... Again the opposition members raised their voice in protest.

Sheikh Hasina then asked her party colleagues and other opposition members to walk out which was carried out at 12:55.

In the deserted house, Suranjit Sengupta of the Ganatantri Party, said the Information Minister's comment and subsequent incident proved that the treasury bench wanted to make the House inactive.

After his brief speech, Sengupta joined his fellow opposition members.

Badruddoza Chowdhury requested that he had already requested the Speaker to expunge the comments and the Information Minister had also regretted.

Food Minister Mir Shawkat Ali, taking floor, said the Awami League during its time had erased writings of verses of the Holy Quran from Dhaka University campus.

After the opposition walkout, treasury bench member Ziaul Huq said the statements and remarks of some ministers embarrassed them and without naming called for refraining themselves from making such remarks.

Prof Badruddoza requested the Deputy Speaker to adjourn the House for five minutes and allow the opposition members to attend the proceedings.

Deputy Speaker Humayun Khan Pannit directed for expunging the Information Minister's remarks and adjourned the House for five minutes.

The House resumed its proceedings after about 20 minutes with Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali in the chair. But he adjourned the House upon advice from the Deputy Leader of the House till 10 am today.

Russian arms official held

MOSCOW, Mar 1: A senior official from Russia's arms industry has been arrested and charged with spying. Itar-Tass news agency said today, reports Reuter.

The bench comprises Justice A K M Sadek and Justice K M Hasan.

Former President Hussain Mohammad Ershad filed a criminal revisional application for quashing of the charges brought against him in a corruption case.

In the special case No 50 of 1993, President Ershad, a former minister and a former secretary have been charged for spending government money for the renovation of an abandoned house in Dhammuni in the capital which was used as Jatiya Party office.

The High Court fixed the hearing of the petition on April 4, 1994.

Salam

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said the people of this country are so conscious and possessed of intellect, that they would not accept anything that is said about the ministers and the government.

He said, "As a politician and individually, we want to uphold the dignity of Leader of the Opposition in the interest of democracy, nation and the people."

He expressed the hope that she should accordingly live up to that expectation and not issue statements without basis just for the sake of cheap popularity.

Apology demanded

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House, Sheikh Hasina demanded that the Speaker take action against him as per the JS Rules of Procedure for his repeated attempts to create indiscipline in Parliament.

When Sheikh Hasina was informed by newsmen that the Information Minister had already withdrawn his remarks and regretted the comments, she said, "We demand an unqualified apology from the minister."

Moudud Ahmed of the Jatiya Party (JP) observed that the treasury bench had developed a tendency to take serious things lightly.

Terming the Hebron massacre as an incident of gross human rights violations, the JP leader said the government had failed to attach due importance to the issue. Besides, the Information Minister's attitude was indicative of the lack of leadership in the government.

Sheikh Anser Ali of the Jamaat said it was really unfortunate that a minister of the world's third biggest Muslim country had accused the opposition parties of 'shedding crocodile tears' on the massacre of Muslims in Hebron.

Demanding Huda's unconditional apology, the Jamaat leader alleged that the Information Minister had been consistently trying to make the parliament ineffective.

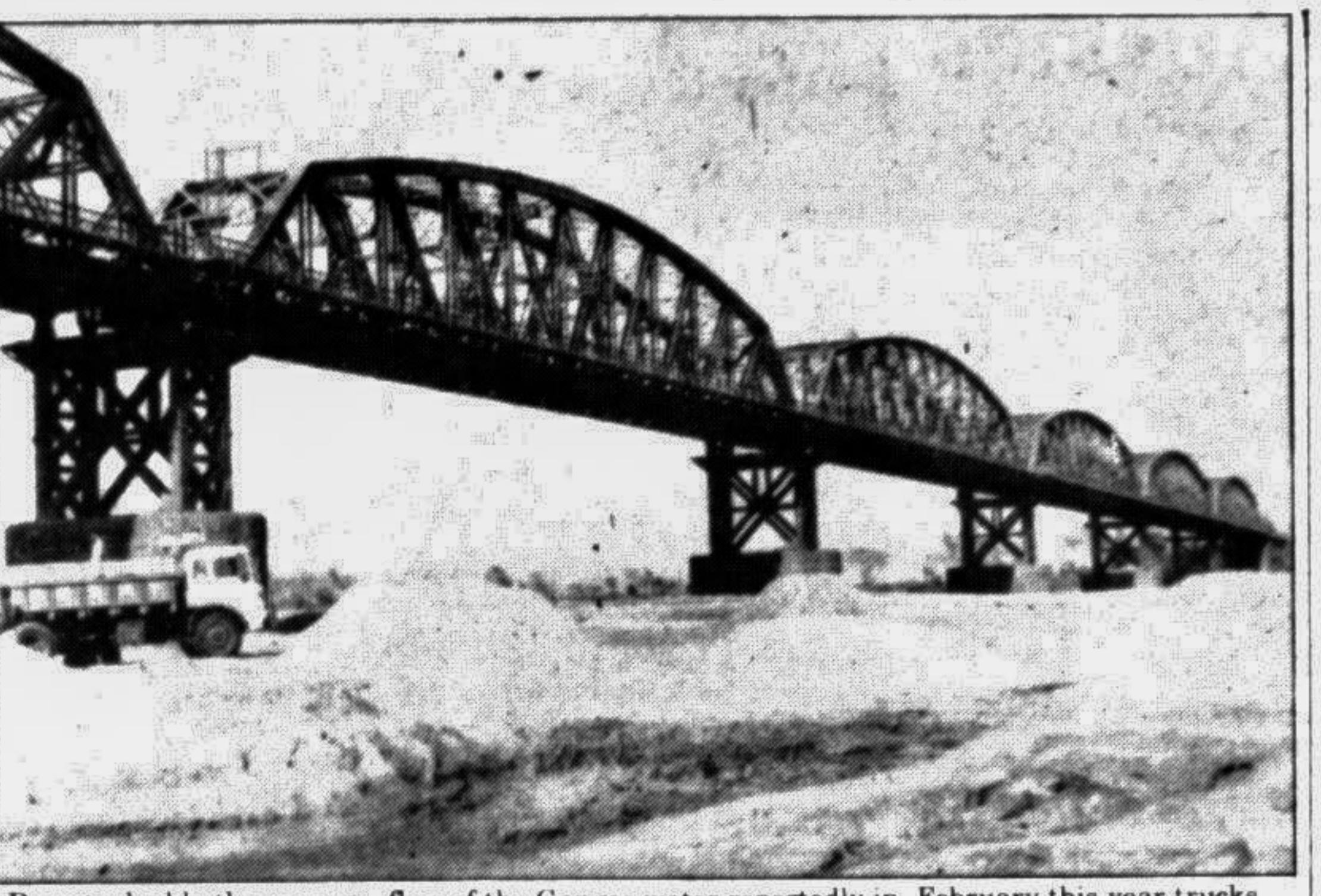
Suranjit Sengupta of the Ganatantri Party said, the Information Minister had, in fact, hurt the sentiments of the Muslims, especially when people all over the world, irrespective of their religious beliefs, had condemned the Hebron massacre. The Ganatantri Party leader, in this regard, advised the minister to seek "tauba" (divine forgiveness).

Rashed Khan Menon of the Workers Party (WP), accusing the government of inaction over the Hebron killings, observed that the Foreign Minister should have made a statement in the House explaining the government position.

Police also recovered two knives and 10 crackers from the auto-rickshaw.

The WP MP also described the Information Minister as a trouble maker in the House and demanded an apology from him.

Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury of the National Democratic Party and Maulana Obaidul Huq of the Islami Oikya Jote also criticised the Information Minister.



Despite double the average flow of the Ganges water reportedly in February this year trucks plied under the Hardinge Bridge at Paksey. This picture was taken last Sunday.

— Star photo by AKM Mohsin

Average flow of Ganges doubles

The average flow of the Ganges as recorded at Hardinge Bridge last month was 38,000 cusecs as against 15,000 cusecs during the corresponding period of the last year, reports UNB.

But it was over 60,000 cusecs during the same period in 1978, a year after the signing of the five-year Indo-Bangladesh water sharing agreement in 1977.

However, last month's average flow by no means guarantee that Bangladesh will continue to receive at the same level in the current month, said a source.

The months of March and April are crucial. The average flow at Hardinge Bridge point in March 1993 recorded an all-time low of 9,200 cusecs.

In March 1992, Bangladesh received on an average 16,000 cusecs.

As a result of the diversion of the Ganges flow by India, Bangladesh suffered agricultural loss to the tune of some 4,000 crore taka from 1976 to 1993 in the Ganges-dependent districts of Khulna, Jessore, Kushtia, Faridpur, parts of Barisal Pabna and Rajshahi.

Prokrichi

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insulting for the present cabinet that its decisions, approved by the Prime Minister will be reviewed by a committee commented ANH Akther Hussain, a senior Prokrichi leader.

The meeting, held at the Krishibid Institution, said the government was 'helpless' in the hands of a section of bureaucrats who opposed reforms in the country's administration and obstructed development programmes.

A report published in a section of newspapers Tuesday said the government was soon going to form a committee headed by M Mahbubuzzaman.

Prokrichi central leaders will meet today (Wednesday) to discuss their future action programme to be announced at the organisation's council meet on April 5.

Diesel import

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Appearing for the government, Attorney General Aminul Huq, on the other hand, contended according to a press release, that under the Petroleum Act of 1974 such imports without an agreement were prohibited.

Rejecting the contention of the Attorney General, the court ruled that the impugned order was made without lawful authority and directed the respondents to allow the release of the cargo immediately.

The court made the ruling absolute with a cost of Tk 5,000 levied against the respondents.

QC Petroleum had imported over 16,000 tons of high speed diesel which arrived at the outer anchorage of the Chittagong Port on December 27 last. Subsequently, the company paid all import duties for clearance of the consignment but at the last moment the Customs Department refused to allow the release of the cargo.

Rafiqueul Huq, Mahmudul Islam and M Moniruzzaman Khan appeared on behalf of the petitioners.

Muggers

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Rahman followed the muggers by a microbus from Bijoy Nagar and was able to capture them near the Narayanganj bus terminal. Another accomplice however, fled leaving the auto-rickshaw behind, police said.

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Export earning increases in last 3 years

National Committee on Export in its first meeting yesterday reviewed the country's export situation in last three years, reports UNB.

Chaired by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, the meeting was held at the International Conference Centre.

The meeting was informed that export earning rose gradually in the last three years. The country's export earning which stood at US dollar 1718 million in 1990-91 fiscal rose to US dollar 2383 million in 1992-93 making a positive effect in reducing the gap in the balance of payment.

The rate of export of commodities like ready-made garments, knitwear, frozen food, leather, agricultural products and chemicals was appreciable, the meeting said pointing at the positive measures taken by the government in this regard.

The government had formulated a two-year 1993-95 export policy last August to maintain the continuous increase in export earning and has set the target for 1993-94 at US dollar 2900 million while that of 1994-95 at US dollar 3500 million.

Feature of the present export policy include tax-free import of machineries by 100 per cent export-oriented industries and establishment of export development fund.

A task force led by Commerce Minister has also been formed for immediate solution of problems in export sector.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, Commerce Minister Shamsul Islam, Jute Minister Brig (Retd) Hannan Shah, Industries Minister A M Zahiruddin Khan, State Minister for Planning Dr Moyer Khan, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Bangladesh Bank Governor, NBR Chairman, president of FBCCI and other members of the committee attended the meeting.

Palestinians

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those released had committed crimes since the September 13 autonomy deal with the PLO and all were from groups which support the peace process.

Reuter adds: Rabin said in remarks broadcast today that Israel would accept an international presence in Gaza and the Jericho area but not an armed international force.

Rutskoi to run for president in '96

MOSCOW, Mar 1: Former Russian vice-president Alexander Rutskoi, released from jail Saturday, will run for president in 1996 when President Boris Yeltsin's term expires, a leading member of his party said today.

Until then, Rutskoi plans to be "very active" in strengthening his party, the Free Russia People's Party, and in planning his election campaign, according to Vassili Lipitski, a member of the new parliament and a leader of the Rutskoi party.

Reuter adds: President Boris Yeltsin said today freed leaders of an October uprising against him would be re-arrested immediately if they tried to stir up conflict.

One killed in Sylhet mishap

SYLHET, Mar 1: A former VP of Madan Mohan College was killed and his cousin injured critically when a minibus hit their motorcycle on the Airport Road near Mainichara bazaar in the town today, reports UNB.

Police said the body of Shajruddin, 26, was sent to the morgue.

Chakma returnees

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now as they got a package of benefits including a big cash", Sharat said ruefully.

He added that those who had come back secretly earlier were given only ration but no cash money or other benefits.

Another returnee Bonabihari Chakma, 41, at Kukichara village said that he had come back with his nine-member family after hearing the assurances of rehabilitation and security given by the Bangladesh government through their leader Upendra Lal Chakma (Chairman of the Refugee Welfare Association).

"I feel very happy to be back home" said Bonabihari adding "It is a pleasure both to live and die in one's own country."

"Now, I am planning to resume cultivation on my land" said lungi-clad Bonabihari with a smile, standing in front of his aunt Kiron Shashi Chakma's house where his family took temporary shelter after return from Tripura.

He then took his correspondence to his house which was being built anew with the relief materials.

He said his family fled home out of fear when the insurgency increased around his locality. About 95 per cent people fled their homes at that time, he added.

During a visit to Parachhara village of Khagrachhari district, 35 year old Alonika Chakma, who returned on February 17 with her eight-member family, said "We have

decided to rebuild our houses and restart farming on our lands to lead life as before.

When asked, Alonika said her family had left for India because of troubled situation in the village. She said her husband Kanti Bikash Chakma had worked as a block convenor at the camp in Tripura: Alonika's family is now staying in her in-law's house.

However, Thana Nirbahi Officer (TNO) of Khagrachhari Sadar Shawkat Nabi informed that in his area only 117 refugees from 27 families had returned from the Indian camps out of some 4644 members of 966 families.

The returnees were quickly sent to their homesteads providing them Tk 10,000 per family in cash in addition to other materials including corrugated iron sheets, he informed.

Shawkat observed that quick rehabilitation measures taken by this government for the refugees had brightened the prospect of the return of the rest of the refugees now encamped in India.

"But in the past, the refugees who came back secretly were provided with some ration only, no cash despite commitment", he remarked.

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Commemorative festival

Clinton wishes success

US President Bill Clinton has expressed his good wishes for the Liberation War Commemorative Festival '94 to be held on March 22 at the National Museum in Dhaka, a festival committee press release said. reports BSS.

In a letter sent to the chief coordinator of the festival M A Bari Advocate by a White House spokesman Marsha Scott said President Clinton has wished success of the festival.

Meanwhile, member of British Parliament Peter Shore has expressed his desire to attend the festival while Lord Ennals MP, Glenda Jackson MP and Tony Benn MP of Britain have sent separate letters expressing good wishes for the festival.

British High Commissioner in Dhaka, P J Fowler in a letter has accepted the invitation in principle to attend the function.

GCO gheraoes DU VC office

By DU Correspondent

The Ganatantri Chhatra Okya (GCO) gheraoed the office of the Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University yesterday noon demanding construction of a monument in memory of Razu.

According to witnesses, some 100 armed terrorists raided the house of one D