

## 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 Bangladesh 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 Matior Rahman Nizami, Deputy Opposition Leader Abul 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 oppo-

sition 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 Bismillah 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 repeated that he had already requested the Speaker to expunge the comments and the Information Minister had also regretted.

Food Minister Mir Shaukat 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 Panni 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 Reuters.



## Canadian Secy of State for Asia Pacific due Mar 6

The Canadian Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific, Raymond Chan, will be visiting Bangladesh from March 6 to 9, a Canadian High Commission press release said yesterday, reports BSS.

Chan is making his first visit to South Asia since his appointment to this new ministerial post following the election of the Liberal Party October last.

During his four-day stay, Chan will meet ministers, senior government officials and representatives of domestic and international development organisations. He will also visit some Canadian development projects.



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 guaranteed 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 Akhter 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.

Rahique-ul Huq, Mahmudul Islam and M Moniruzzaman Khan appeared on behalf of the petitioners.

## Muggers

From Page 1 Col 5

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.

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

The muggers Badal, 24, and Swapan alias Khokon, 22, were taken to the city's detective branch at Minto Road for interrogation.

Later, Inspector General of Police (IGP) A S M Shajahan in the evening declared IG badge award for Nirmal and Mizan for their daring do.

## 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 readymade 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 Moyeen Khan, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Bangladesh Bank Governor, NBR Chairman, president of FBCCI and other members of the committee attended the meeting.

The students also submitted a memorandum to the VC.

The GCO leaders also held a rally in front of the VC office.

The rally was addressed by Mustak Alam Tulu, Obayedur Rahman Chunnu and Junayet Saki.

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

Moin Hossain Razu, a student of the Department of Soil Science of DU, was gunned down at the TSC road crossing in an anti-terrorism procession on March 13 in 1992.

The VC, Professor Emajuddin Ahmed yesterday assured the students that the authorities would lay the foundation stone of the monument shortly.

The GCO leaders also held a rally in front of the VC office.

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## B Chowdhury

From Page 1 Col 3

practice withdrawal of comments an expressing of sorrow for making comments were acceptable to those who felt hurt. He said he had confirmed twice the regret and withdrawal of comments by the Information Minister before the opposition left the House because he thought that the opposition members might not hear the Information Minister due to pandemonium.

Refuting allegation made by opposition of governments "love for the Jews" Prof Chowdhury said it was the BNP government which incorporated "Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim" in the Constitution. It would not be fair to utter such allegation against the government because the ruling party was based on Islamic values, he added.

He recalled that Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman was the vice-chairman of the Al-Quds Committee and made significant contribution in resolving the resolution of Palestinian problem and Iran-Iraq war. He said the present government had always upheld the cause of Muslims all over the world particularly the Palestinians and Bosnian issues.

The Deputy Leader of the House said the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh had already met the ambassador of the Muslim countries in Bangladesh and conveyed deep shock and condemnation of Bangladesh to them on Hebron massacre. Other steps to express the sentiment of Bangladesh were underway, he said and added that it was the policy of the government to register strong protest against any persecution of Muslims anywhere in the world.

He sought cooperation from all quarters to run the House in an orderly manner and said constructive attitude by all would make the Sangsad more meaningful.

Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam and Whip Mahbubul Alam Tara were present on the occasion.

## Round-table

From Page 1 Col 4

vestments". Saifur Rahman said, "But it is going to be extremely tough to get resources by imposing taxes and cutting wasteful expenditure."

"Through seasonal employment programmes like construction of embankments and roads, we are trying to remove the hardships of the poor," the Finance Minister said.

He wrapped up by saying that the development process will have to be a participatory to eliminate poverty.

Owaise Sadaat of the World Bank and Convener of the Task Force on poverty alleviation of the Planning Commission Dr Sk Maqsood Ali said the poor have better work ethics and the percentage of paying back loans was higher among them than any other classes.

The participants also shared the view that supporting the poor to become self-reliant was the only way to ensure poverty alleviation.

## The Midnight File

## Finland to join EU

BRUSSELS, Mar 1: Finland today reached agreement on conditions for joining the European Union, German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel said, paving the way for its membership of the union in 1995. Diplomatic sources said the Finns had obtained a last minute concession in the form of clauses safeguarding its market in preserved fruit and vegetable against saturation by foreign competition, reports AFP.

## 11 killed, 17 hurt in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, Mar 1: Eleven people including a police officer and four suspected militants were killed and 17 others sustained injuries while security forces captured 11 militants, two of them self-styled 'commanders' along with arms and ammunition in Kashmir valley since last evening. Militants abducted a person, hijacked a vehicle, set fire to hospital buildings, attacked security forces and looted gas turbine and post office during the period in the state, an official spokesman told reporters here today, reports PTI.

## 3 of a family slaughtered in Chuadanga

From Our Correspondent

CHUADANGA, Mar 1: Three members of a family were slaughtered here at Boalmari Sadar last night.

According to witnesses, some 100 armed terrorists raided the house of one Dabiruddin and dragged him out of his house along with his younger brother Muniruddin and cousin Siddik.

The brothers were shot and then butchered in front of their family members and neighbours at around 12:30 last night.

The terrorists, allegedly belonging to the outlawed Purbia Bangla Communist Party, also set fire to the house of the victims. Police, however, kept silent about the identity of the killers.

Neighbours said that the outlawed men were angry with Dabiruddin as earlier he was instrumental behind the arrest of one of their colleagues.

The act of revenge has triggered panic among the villagers, particularly among the youths who had fled the village following the incident.

A case was lodged with the Chuadanga police but no arrests were made till filing of this report.

## New VAT rates

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doubled the VAT collection from the sector.

The system was, however, introduced in the face of strong movement by the owners of hotels and restaurants. They refused to pay VAT and went on an indefinite strike protesting the system of the VAT collection.

Later, the National Board of Revenue (NBR), after discussions with them, introduced the 'flat rate system' and fixed the rates considering the size of hotel and the volume of investment.

According to sources, the NBR will start discussions soon with the associations of other sectors to fix separate rates of VAT.

A top official of the NBR talking to The Daily Star Sunday said such a system of VAT collection was being followed in France for the small traders of that country. The system is called the 'forfait system'.

In most cases, he said, the small traders in this country do not maintain any accounts of their sales or profit and loss, which often create difficulties for the VAT collectors to fix an amount to be paid by the individual traders. The new system would remove the difficulties, he observed.

The NBR official also said there are allegations that the VAT inspectors harass the traders and adopt unfair means while charging VAT. If the system is implemented, and flat rates are fixed for the individual sectors, such malpractices would also be removed, he added.

None but the voters, persons on election duty, contesting candidates, their election agents and polling agents would be allowed to be in the polling centres on the election day, the press release added.

Polling will be held from 7 am to 3 pm without any break. Student voters have been requested to carry their identity cards during the voting hours.

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