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BNP may place bill for EC reforms tomorrow

By Nurul Kabir

The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), in a unilateral move for resolving the present political impasse, has finalised the draft of a bill seeking major reforms of the electoral system.

The bill, seeking significant amendments to the Peoples' Representation Act, 1972, is likely to be moved in Parliament tomorrow.

The opposition parties have been boycotting the proceedings of Jatiya Sangsad (JS) to make the ruling party move a bill seeking constitutional provision for holding general elections under a non-partisan caretaker government. They maintained that a caretaker administration was a must to ensure free and fair elections.

But the BNP policymakers, who differ with the Opposition on the issue, believe that a stronger Election Commission and suitable laws and rules provide a solution to the issue of free and fair polls. The standing committee of the BNP, the highest policy making body of the party, took decision in this regard on June 13.

Originally drafted by Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali as part of his initiative to end the political impasse and approved by the BNP high command, the bill proposed resignation of all the ministers, except the Prime Minister, before the filing of nomination papers for general elections, four weeks ahead of the election date.

The Prime Minister would continue in office under article 57 (C) of the Constitution to ensure constitutional continuity of governance of the state by the elected representative of the people, it said.

The Prime Minister, in case his or her party fails to return as a majority party in Parliament, would transfer power to the leader of the newly elected House, commanding majority, the bill proposed.

According to the provisions of the draft bill, the additional district judges will act as the returning officers at district level in the elections. Presently, the deputy commissioners (DCs) discharge the responsibilities of returning officers.

According to the draft bill, the administration involved in the polling process would act under the Election Commission (EC) during the general elections and no transfer of public servants could be made by the government in the months before and after the elections, without prior permission of the EC.

The bill also proposed to give more powers to the EC to take disciplinary actions against public servants trying to influence the voters or manipulate election results for or against any political party. The EC would also have powers to withdraw any official from the election duty if he or she is found to be working in favour or against any candidate.

Apart from these, specific measures have been suggested to prevent candidates from influencing the voters by distributing money and favours, arranging vehicles for the voters on the election day and creating panic in various ways even including the use of large number of motor bikes by supporters of candidates during election.

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World Bank suggests

Remove financial market obstacles

By Inam Ahmed

The government should take actions backed by political commitment to remove the demand and supply side factors dampening the activities of the financial markets in Bangladesh, according to the World Bank (WB).

While the demand side problems can be tackled easily, it will need serious efforts to remove the supply side problems, the bank observed in a recent report — From stabilisation to growth.

On the supply side, the nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) have slammed brakes on lending because new prudential regulations have exposed their weaknesses and the NCBs also do not have the expertise to develop new financial instruments.

The demand side problems

affecting demand for credit include 'the weakness of economic activity and the current problem of low aggregate demand, high real interest rates, low SOE activity and an apparent dearth of credit worthy borrowers with acceptable collateral', the report said.

The WB said that the major barrier to financial sector development is the government's ownership of the main financial institutions and forced credit policy which have led to an uncompetitive and oligopolistic financial sector.

The WB observed that the long overdue fundamental reform of the financial market along with strengthened bank supervision, privatisation and new private bank entry were now needed to be done immediately.

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Dr Kamal accuses govt, opposition of patronising communal forces

By Staff Correspondent

Gana Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday castigated both the government and the major opposition party for 'patronising' the fundamentalist and communal forces for their selfish ends.

'The government, in a bid to hide its failures, is directly and indirectly aiding the fundamentalist and communal forces and the biggest opposition party which claims to be the sole force in the pro-liberation camp, is doing politics of entente with the anti-liberation and fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami and the autocratic Jatiya Party,' Dr Kamal told a press conference at his Segun Bagicha party office yesterday afternoon.

'People will neither forgive those trying to cling to power nor those trying to go to power through entente or compromise.'

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Delay in forming NHA

\$50m housing project for the urban poor uncertain

Star Report

The formation of the National Housing Authority (NHA) under the Ministry of Housing and Public Works is being delayed making the fate of a \$50 million US dollar project for sheltering urban poor uncertain.

The National Housing Policy, 1993, approved by the government in December last stipulates, among others, creation of the NHA for boosting and accelerating housing programme in the country. According to the policy, the Housing and Settlement Directorate and the office of the Deputy Commissioner of

Settlement would be transformed into the NHA which would operate as an autonomous organisation. The NHA will mobilise both local and foreign funds for housing with special emphasis on the low and middle income groups of people.

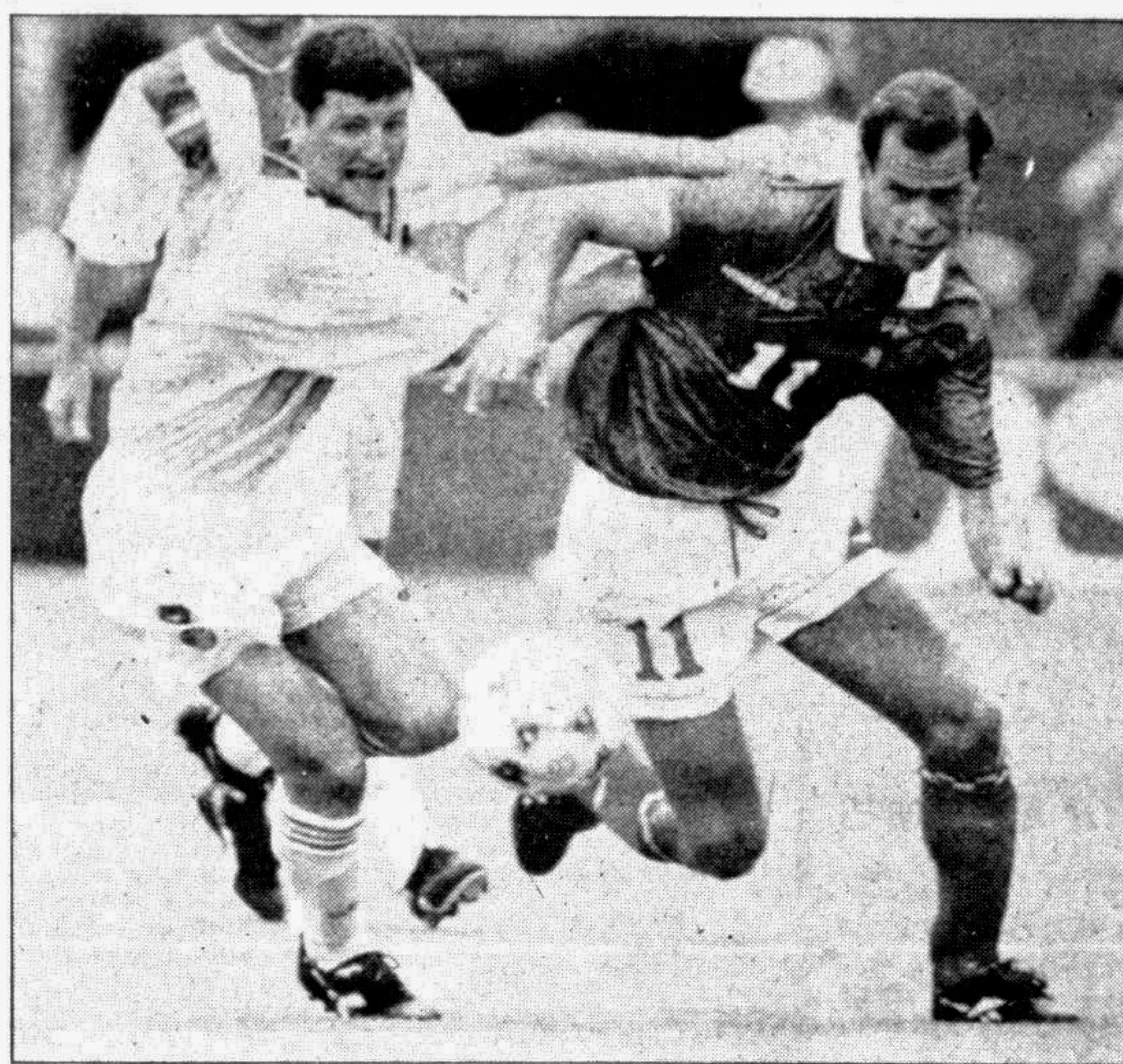
Six months have passed since the adoption of the policy, but there was little progress regarding creation of the NHA. Some sources pointed out that due to bureaucratic procrastination, formation of the Authority is being delayed impeding implementation of the some

housing projects.

According to the sources, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) agreed in principle to provide 50 million US dollars for a housing project for the urban poor, which is supposed to be implemented by the proposed NHA. The Urban Development Directorate (UDD) has already prepared the project concept paper (PCP) for the purpose and submitted it to the Ministry of Housing and Public Works.

The ADB has also agreed to provide 600,000 dollars as project preparatory technical

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Ireland's Denis Irwin (L) grabs Mexico's Luis Alues (R) as the two fight for control of the ball June 24 during first half action in their World Cup Group E match in Orlando, Florida. Mexico won 2-1.

— AFP photo

Garcia goals power Mexico

ORLANDO, June 24: Luis Garcia fired two stunning goals to give Mexico a 2-1 victory over Ireland today and throw Group E of the World Cup wide open, reports Reuter.

Luis Garcia struck with predatory finality in the 44th and 66th minutes to give those three all-important points to Mexico and leave all four teams in the group level on three points after two matches.

Substitute John Aldridge pulled one back for Ireland with a header in the 84th minute.

Mexico, beaten 1-0 by Norway in their opening game in Washington last Sunday, made four changes to give them more bite in midfield and attack and the switches paid off handsomely.

Ireland, 1-0 conquerors of 1982 World Cup champions Italy in the New York Giants Stadium last Saturday, could not wrest the initiative from the Mexicans, who had to play with the greater urgency and did so.

With Italy beating Norway 1-0 on Thursday, there is everything to play for in the last of three group games each has to come.

Luis Garcia notched his first with a blistering shot which

a goal. Luis Garcia still had another gem to delight the Mexican fans and set their drums beating in the steamy Citrus Bowl stadium.

Alberto Garcia Aspe — brought in for this match with Bernal, Carlos Hermosillo and midfielder Jorge Rodriguez — beat Irish full back Denis Irwin and squared a little pass along the edge of the box for Luis Garcia to thunder home his second goal.

Mexico, Ireland, Italy and Norway are tied four-way for the top spot in the Group E competition with three points each. Goal differentials are equal for all four.

Mexico dominated play nearly all the day with short give-and-go passes and speedy dribbling action until substitute John Aldridge flicked in a header in front of the goal with six minutes left to put the Irish back in the game at 2-1.

Garcia was the star of the day, however, with a goal in

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provided a fitting coup de grace at the end of a fine Mexican attack.

Marcelino Bernal sent over a cross from the right which was turned back for Luis Garcia to volley home and send Mexico into the interval pumped up by the vital boost of

CU BCL calls indefinite strike

CHITTAGONG, June 24: The Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) has called for an indefinite strike in the Chittagong University from tomorrow to protest Thursday's attack on its activists by the Shibir supporters, reports UNB.

Five BCL activists were injured in a clash with the Islamic Chhatra Shibir workers on Thursday following altercations over the Supreme Court verdict restoring the citizenship of the Jamaat-e-Islami leader Golam Azam.

The condition of two injured BCL activists Selim and Heru deteriorated today and they were admitted to a private clinic.

Vice Chancellor of the University Prof Rafiqul Islam Chowdhury visited the injured students at the clinic and en-

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No-confidence against Hata delayed

TOKYO, June 24: Japan's house of representatives decided to convene a full session early Saturday on a no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Tsutomu Hata but it was not clear if it would immediately vote, reports AFP.

The lower house approved a proposal late Friday from its steering committee to open the special session at 1 am (1600 gmt Friday) but there was no decision as to when it would vote on the no-confidence motion.

The main opposition Liberal Democratic Party submitted the motion Thursday while the ruling coalition continued efforts to persuade the Social Democratic Party (SDP) to return to its fold.

After failing to change the

mind of the SDP Friday, Hata was holding talks overnight with his ally and political kingmaker Ichiro Ozawa to work out strategy, press reports said.

'You had better not understand so', Keiwa Okuda, chairman of the steering committee, told reporters when asked if the vote would be taken immediately. There is usually some debate on such a motion before voting, the report said.

Earlier, the Jiji and Kyodo news agencies said, Japan's ruling and opposition parties agreed today to vote on a no-confidence motion against the government Hata at 1 am Saturday (1600 GMT Friday).

The SDP, which quit the

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TONIGHT'S WORLD CUP MATCHES ON TV

Group F: Belgium vs Holland 22:30 (BST)
Group D: Argentina vs Nigeria 02:00 (BST)
★ The Group F Saudi Arabia vs Morocco match at 22:30 (BST) will not be shown live.

EU signs treaty with Russia

CORFU, Greece, June 24: The European Union (EU) emerging from a period of recession and self-doubt, signed a landmark friendship agreement with Russia today and sealed membership treaties with Austria, Finland, Sweden and Norway, reports Reuter.

While the EU leaders were binding Europe to ever closer ties, they faced a potentially embarrassing failure to agree a key item on the agenda of their two-day summit — a new European commission president.

Under a brilliant sky and against the backdrop of a Venetian fortress on the Greek island of Corfu, Russian President Boris Yeltsin signed the latest in a web of economic and political accords with the West to help stabilise his country.

Leaders from the four would be EU states followed immediately afterwards, signing accession treaties that will expand the bloc from 12 to 16 members if voters in Sweden, Norway and Finland agree in referendums later this year.

Austrians have already voted in favour of joining.

The EU-Russia pact, concluded two days after Moscow agreed to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's partnership for peace scheme, offers the Russians the long-term prospect of a free-trade agreement with the union.

'I think it is a truly great step towards the reunion of our continent,' Yeltsin said at the signing ceremony in the church of St. George.

NATO jets on high alert in Bosnia

SARAJEVO, June 24: A Serb attack on a UN convoy sent NATO warplanes into high alert amid a surge in fighting that mocked a cease-fire, UN officials said Friday, reports AP.

The United Nations requested air presence from NATO after an aid convoy was attacked twice by mortar and small-arms fire in a Bosnian government-held area about 30 kilometers northeast of Tuzla, said UN spokesman Maj Rob Annink.

The second attack stopped when the planes dropped flares as a warning before a possible bombing run, he said. There were no casualties.

It was the first time NATO planes had been asked to intervene since the start of a month-long Bosnia-wide cease-fire on June 10.

The truce was meant to cool tempers ahead of the next round of negotiations on splitting Bosnia-Herzegovina between Bosnian Serbs and a new federation of Bosnian Muslims and Croats.

International mediators have proposed giving the Muslim-Croat federation 51 per cent of Bosnian territory. However, the Serbs, who now control 70 per cent of Bosnia after launching war in April 1992, have not agreed to that division.

Fighting subsided in the first week of the cease-fire, but has increased over the past week, and other provisions of

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5 killed in Kigali hospital shelling

NAIROBI, June 24: Five patients were killed and dozens of others seriously injured when a shell slammed into a Red Cross hospital in a government-controlled sector of Kigali today, a UN spokesman said.

There were about 40 in the hospital when the shell landed, said spokesman Pierre Mehu.

The shell, apparently fired by the rebel Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), hit the emergency ward.

They (patients) were lying in their beds when the shell landed directly on the emergency room,' Mehu told AFP by telephone from Kigali.

Most patients at the ICRC hospital are casualties from continuing battles between rebels and government forces fighting for control of Rwanda's capital Kigali.

AP adds: The number of refugees fleeing to neighbour-

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BLUE CROSS

SCORE BOARD

FRIDAY'S RESULTS

Group E: Italy 1; Norway 0
Group C: S. Korea 0; Bolivia 0
Group E: Mexico 2; Ireland 1

STANDINGS

Group A: P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	Group D: P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Switzerland	2	1	1	0	5	2	4	Argentina	1	1	0	0	3
USA	2	1	1	0	3	2	4	Nigeria	1	1	0	0	3
Romania	2	1	0	1	4	5	3	Bulgaria	1	0	0	1	3
Colombia	2	0	0	2	2	5	0	Greece	1	0	0	1	0
Group B:							Group E:						
Brazil	1	1	0	0	2	0	3	Ireland	2	1	0	1	2
Cameroon	1	0	1	0	2	2	1	Italy	2	1	0	1	1
Sweden	1	0	1	0	2	2	1	Norway	2	1	0	1	1
Russia	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	Mexico	2	1	0	1	2
Group C:							Group F:						
Germany	2	1	1	0	2	1	4	Belgium	1	1	0	0	1
Spain	2	0	2	0	3	3	2	Netherlands	1	1	0	0	2
S. Korea	2	0	2	0	2	2	2	Morocco	1	0	0	1	0
Bolivia	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	S. Arabia	1	0	0	1	2

100% FULL CREAM SWEETENED CONDENSED MILK

50 hurt as JCD factions clash in Comilla

From Our Correspondent

COMILLA, June 24: At least 50 people including seven policemen were injured in a two-hour long armed clash between two rival groups of the Jatiyabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) here this evening.

Constable Khalilur Rahman, 43, sepoy Moniruddin Chowdhury, 33 and JCD leader Amiruzzaman Amir were seriously injured.

Twenty JCD activists including prominent leaders Rakha and Shafiq Khan were arrested during the incident.

Police said, both the factions of the JCD used pistols, sawed off rifles and cocktails in the clashes that took place near the Town Hall in Kandirpar.

Over 50 rounds of gunshots and hundred cocktail blasts were heard during the two-hour fight. Police opened 20 rounds of blank fire and lobbed 15 rounds of tear gas shells.



With the deadline for The Daily Star World Cup Bumper Quiz expiring at ten last night thousands of eager soccer buffs came to the newspaper office throughout the day yesterday to submit their answers for tomorrow's lucky draw. This picture was taken at the stroke of ten last night.

— Star photo