

Sharing of experience in social uplift stressed

By Staff Correspondent

RAJENDRAPUR (Joydevpur), Oct 29: A number of Asian luminaries, winners of the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award, have suggested spreading the fruits of innovations in social advancement among a larger number of people, particularly the poor.

There is the need for sharing the experience of one country with another so that their peoples could benefit from the new, successful ideas, they told a press conference here yesterday.

The press conference was held after a two-day seminar attended by Magsaysay Award recipients that dwelt on "How to spread the benefits of unique individual or organisational initiatives across Asia and explore avenues for sharing those."

Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation (RMAF), a Manila-based trust that awards the prize every year, organised the seminar at the BRAC's Rajendrapur Centre for Development Management.

Seven award recipients from South Asia took part in the seminar together with senior government officials from Bangladesh, NGO leaders, scholars, researchers, representatives from a number of donor agencies and journalists.

Briefing newsmen, RMAF Chairman Deogracias N. Vistan said the search for excellent development ideas must continue and Asian countries should go for increased sharing of their experience in the social advancement efforts.

"For example, Bangladesh should share its magnificent NGO experience in poverty alleviation with other countries for the benefit of the poor in Asia," he said.

There is also the need for mobilising people into community participation and replication of the successful development models, Vistan added.

The seminar, the first one

in Bangladesh attended by the Magsaysay winners of South Asia, discussed issues like charting the role of the NGOs in social development efforts, sustainability of development programmes, training of the development workers and enhancing cooperation between the private sector and the government.

Discussions on the ways to remove the existing barrier to development initiatives also featured prominently in the seminar, according to the participants.

When asked, the participants identified politicisation of development efforts, organised political campaign against the NGOs, and absence of close ties between the NGOs and the governments as some of the major impediments to the development.

Replying to a question on more responsible role of the NGOs and their accountability, Father Timm said that the country's NGO's maintained strict accountability to the government in planning and funding different programmes.

The seminar approved 12 projects for funding in India, the Philippines, Korea, Thailand and China.

The recipients of the Magsaysay award include six Bangladeshis: Fazi Hasan Abed of BRAC, Dr Mohammad Yunus of Grameen Bank, Dr Zafullah Chowdhury of Gonoshathiya Kendro, M Yeasin of Deedar Cooperative Society in Comilla, Father Richard W Timm CSC of Notre Dame College, and Taherunnessa A Abdullah for social work.

RMAF Executive Trustee Nona B Javier, Treasurer Doreen G Fernandez, and senior BRAC officials were present at the press conference.

Members of the RMAF Board of Trustees and Rockefeller Brothers Fund representative were also present.

Compensation rules

From Page 1 Col 7
lowed the government order for acquisition. As per law, the deputy commissioner concerned is to assess the price and report on the issue to the authorities.

According to sources, the compensation rate was fixed on October 16 at a meeting on implementation of the PMTP with works Minister Rafiqul Islam Mia in the chair. Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury, who hails from the project area, attended the meeting.

The government decision reportedly came in the wake of agitation by the land owners for a reduced price. Earlier, the government had offered the price of Tk 37,000 for a bigha of land. But the land owners rejected it. An influential minister who is learnt to have initiated the PMTP, assured the land owners of compensation at a rate of Tk one lakh per bigha, some sources said. The decision for compensation was taken in line with the minister's assurance.

A high official of the Rajuk said "the matter has taken a political colour." The ruling party leaders of the area are striving for implementation of the project to gain 'popularity' while the opposition leaders are trying to create obstacles by backing the land owners' agitation for higher rate of compensation, the official said.

Fake deeds showing higher prices of lands were being produced by a section of the owners and the government decision for compensation was based on those, the official said.

"The Rajuk will provide compensation at the rate fixed

by the government. But it will cause a sharp rise in the project cost now estimated at Tk 300 crore," he said.

When contacted the works minister denied the allegations of irregularities in fixing the rate of compensation and said the decision was taken as per rules.

The compensation rate of Tk one lakh per bigha has been fixed on the basis of the report of the DC," the minister said.

He also quoted the Rajuk officials, attending the October 16 meeting, as saying that the project would remain viable even if compensation was given at this rate.

Quoting from the acquisition laws which were amended several months ago, the minister said compensation could be given one and half times the actual price. The DC's report showed that the highest price per bigha was up to Tk 30 lakh, he said, adding the rate of Tk one lakh, therefore, was not unrealistic.

Stressing the need for implementation of the project to solve the acute housing problem of the city dwellers, he hinted that the demand of the agitating land owners was also taken into consideration.

The minister, however, declined to comment on the 'political aspects' of the project.

Pak parliament

From Page 1 Col 4

Sharif claimed Daultana's case was just one of many saying Benazir's government was guilty of massive human rights violations. He also said her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, threatened the opposition with jail terms.

Zardari, who is also a legislator, spent two and a half years in jail during Sharif's rule. He was eventually acquitted of all charges.

At one point in the proceedings, dozens of lawmakers from both sides of the House leapt from their chairs and started fighting.

After two hours, the House Speaker adjourned Parliament. The feuding among Pakistan's politicians has made business people worried. The opposition has closed business throughout the country twice in the past month.

Observers say the government has not done enough to appease the opposition.

"This is the message you are sending to the foreign investor. That there is political chaos here," said Altaf Hussain, editor of an English-language economic magazine, Businessline. "It is causing irreparable loss."

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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US President Bill Clinton receives the highest Saudi award from King Fahd at the Khalid military base, northeastern Saudi Arabia Friday. — AFP photo

LGED to implement 28 projects in 1994-95

The Local Government Engineering Directorate (LGED) has undertaken 28 projects for implementation during the 1994-95 fiscal with an involvement of Taka 661.52 crore, reports BSS.

Transfers

Government has transferred Joint Secretary of the Energy Ministry Md Nazrul Islam to the Planning Division, according to an official handout yesterday.

Joint Secretary Md Abdul Latif Mondal who had been working on deputation as the Director of Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) has been transferred to the post of Joint Secretary in the Energy Ministry.

30 hurt in Rupganj

From Page 1 Col 8

They were admitted to different clinics in Narayanganj and Dhaka.

The clashes began at the Rupganj police camp at 7 pm when the police arrested one Mohammad Ali Hossain, publicity secretary of the "Yusufganj" satellite town land acquisition resistance committee.

Hossain was instrumental in organising protest among the local people against the government's acquisition of land for the proposed Yusufganj suburban township, also known as the Purbanchal Model Town Project.

According to him, the government is trying to acquire the land at a price much lower than the actual market value.

The police action created a sharp reaction among the people who gheraoed the police camp at around 7:30. The po-

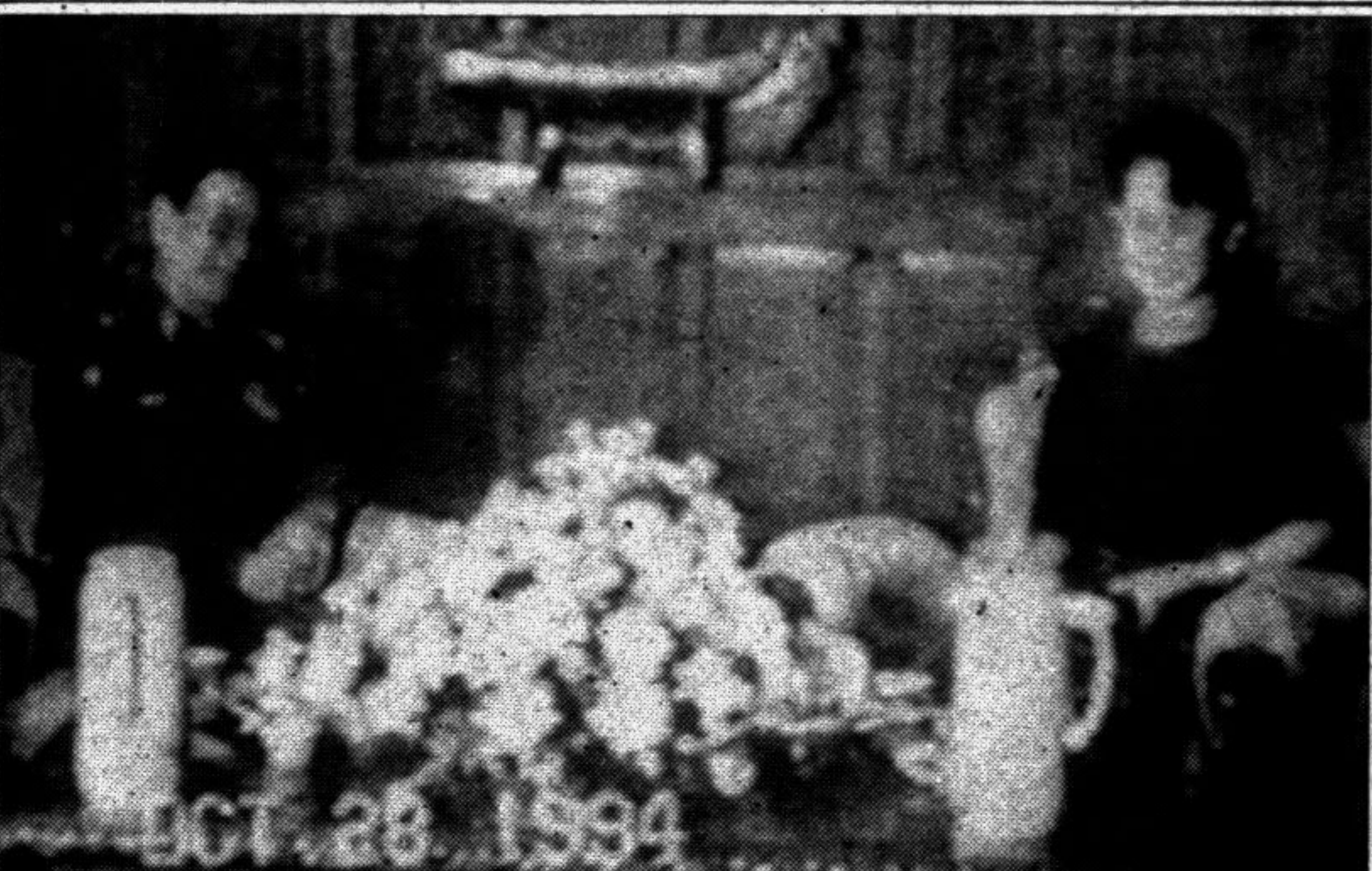
lice tried to disperse the mob by firing a few shots and lobbing tear-gas shells but the agitating mob threw bricks and continued to fight back till 8:45 pm.

Later, however, the people retreated and reassembled at Darigutab Bazar. Police raided the place and picked up seven persons for allegedly chanting slogans against the police. This was followed by a brief clash, witnesses said.

At around 11 pm, the villagers attacked the police camp again and clashes continued till 00:15 am.

During the fresh clashes, police fired 30 to 35 teargas shells, at least 15 bullets and 12 blanks, witnesses said.

The Superintendent of Police of Narayanganj told this correspondent that only one person was arrested. He denied that police resorted to firing.



Lt General Khin Nyunt (L), a member of Myanmar's ruling junta, met opposition leader Aung San Suu-Kyi Friday. It was the second meeting between the two sides since Suu-Kyi was put under house arrest in July 1989. — TV picture by AFP

3 die in city incidents

By Staff Correspondent

A housewife was found dead while two youngsters were killed in separate incidents in the city yesterday.

Nasrin Jahan, 33, a mother of two, was found dead at her Malibagh residence early yesterday.

Mithun, 22, a student of Tejgaon College and Saiful Islam Bakul, 21, were killed by some unidentified miscreants in Nakhalpara and Mirpur in the city.

Our DMCH Correspondent adds: Nasrin, wife of one Chowdhury Jalal Uddin Md Gohar Dastagir, was taken to the Holy Family Hospital at midnight Friday where doctors declared her dead.

Nasrin was an operator of the Sher-e-Bangla Nagar telephone exchange.

Police sources say, Nasrin's husband Dastagir and housemaid Lucky, 16, were arrested in this connection.

Nasrin's father, Mujibur Rahman, alleged that Dastagir had killed his daughter for dowry.

Others alleged Nasrin's husband was having an extra-marital affair.

In another incident, some unidentified persons slashed the wrists and tendon of the right leg of one Saiful Islam Bakul at Mirpur.

Bakul succumbed to his injuries at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Enmity was the cause of the murder, our DMCH Correspondent said.

No one was arrested in this connection until midnight last night.

Mithun, 22, was killed in a clash at Nakhalpara.

Mithun received serious bullet injuries in his back when some unidentified gunmen fired at him at about 6:30 pm yesterday.

BNP proposes nat'l govt

From Page 1 Col 5

appointment under Clause (2) or Clause (3) between a dissolution of Parliament and the next following general election of members of Parliament, the persons who were such members immediately before the dissolution shall be regarded for the purpose of this clause as continuing to be such members."

According to Clause (2) and (3), the President will appoint as Prime Minister the member of Parliament, who appears to him to command the support of the majority members.

Meeting sources said the Opposition negotiators, referring to the same article, argued that the particular provision permits forming a caretaker government with a 'non-partisan' person as its head. But the ruling party leaders insisted the spirit of the article is that the incumbent head of the government will continue till the next elections if Parliament is dissolved by the President.

Inclusion of the Opposition members in such an interim cabinet was termed by the ruling party negotiators a 'cession' to the Opposition, the sources said.

The Opposition negotiators, however, are learnt to have stuck to their original position on a caretaker administration for holding polls. But they did not straightaway reject the new proposal from the government side.

After the meeting, the Opposition negotiators — all from the AL — met party chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina at her official residence at Minto Road.

"We are passing through a crucial moment. It will be unwise to make any comment right now," Mohammad Nasim told newsmen.

Earlier, a brief statement read out by Sir Ninian's aide Christopher Childs said, as planned, the two deputy leaders continued their meetings.

"The time and date of the next meeting will be announced later," he added.

A ruling party source said they had requested the 'facilitator' to adjourn the meeting till Sunday as two of their negotiators had some pre-occupations.

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Commonwealth mediator Sir Ninian Stephen (C) is seen with Deputy Leader in Parliament Professor Badruddoza Chowdhury (R) and Deputy Opposition Leader Abdus Samad Azad (L) during the government-Opposition talks at the state guest house Meghna yesterday. — Star photo

UK observers laud peace efforts in CHT

By Staff Correspondent

A team from the Royal College of Defence Studies (RCDS) of the United Kingdom which recently visited the Chittagong Hill Tracts, appreciated the efforts taken by the government and local people to restore peace in the region.

The team led by Rear Admiral T J England also praised the development works going on in the region.

In a letter to Chairman of the Khagrachhari district local government council Babu Samiran Dewan, the team leader pointed out, "Having visited Kashmir in India two weeks ago, it was particularly interesting to see how different the situation is in the Hill Tracts and to hear from you how well the local government is developing in the region."

The letter, dated October 12, 1994 was sent on return of the observer team, according to sources.

Child rights forum for humanitarian view of problem

By Staff Correspondent

As the October 31 deadline to end use of child labour in the garments industries approaches, the Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum yesterday expressed its apprehension that several thousand young workers would be terminated from the factories to comply with the proposed Harkins Bill in the US Senate.

The country's export-oriented garments factory owners earlier had set the deadline and pledged to rehabilitate the thousands of children, mostly girls. But the Forum, a non-government body to ensure children's rights, is afraid that many young boys and girls would be thrown on the streets and pushed into an uncertain life.

In an appeal, the Forum requested the garments factory owners, the US ambassador in Bangladesh, US Senator Tom Harkin, the BGMEA and others concerned to allow the children, who were still working at the factories, to continue their light work for five to six hours a day and to give them an opportunity to attend school for 2-3 hours daily.

The appeal, for a humanitarian approach to the problem, also warned that if the children, who might be over 15 years of age and yet look younger because of malnutrition, were thrown out of work, they might be forced to work as child prostitutes or may even starve to death. The boys may take to serious crimes.

The Forum also said it was better that these poor children were working instead of going to school because first and foremost they needed to survive.

Lawyers concerned over political crisis

An extended meeting of the Coordination Council of the Bar Associations of Bangladesh has expressed its deep concern over the prevailing political situation including the issue of a caretaker government, reports BSS.

The meeting said that democracy which the nation had achieved after long struggle was going to be endangered again.

The meeting, in a resolution, said that in the absence of democracy none would be benefited.

The meeting observed that both the government and the Opposition have failed to perform their desired roles to resolve the crisis, considering the whole situation. The meeting urged them to resolve the issue in the greater interest of democracy even by deviating from their respective positions, if necessary.

The meeting said that the nation would not forgive if the political parties failed to resolve the present political crisis keeping the national interest above all.

The meeting also demanded separation of the judiciary from the administration to ensure the rule of law in the country and independence of the judiciary.

Held at the south hall of the Supreme Court Bar Association the meeting was presided over by the council President, Advocate Shamsul Haq Chowdhury. Concluded in two separate sessions, the extended meeting was conducted by council General Secretary A F M Meshahuddin.

Khulna Jamaat, Shibir's gherao programme today

From Our Correspondent

KHULNA, Oct 29: Khulna district and city units of Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chahra Shibir will jointly gherao office of the police commissioner here at 10 am tomorrow.

The Midnight File

Clinton promises continued support for ME peace

WASHINGTON, Oct 29: President Bill Clinton returned from his Mideast trip today promising continued support for the region's quest for peace. "The United States will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with those who seek the peace, with those who take risks for peace, with those who stand up for change in the face of terrorists and extremists who seek to destroy the peace by killing the innocent," Clinton said, reports AFP.

Jordanian MPs debate peace treaty

AMMAN, Oct 29: Jordanian MPs debated the peace treaty with Israel in a rowdy session of parliament today, a day after clashes between opponents and supporters of the deal. The 73 deputies at the session in the 80-seat lower house called for the government to justify signing the treaty last Wednesday, before parliament votes on ratifying it. The session was adjourned until Sunday, when the parliament's foreign affairs committee was expected to take up the debate, reports AFP.

Garments export

From Page 1 Col 7
the total export earnings of the country, were 21.72 per cent lower than the target of 1,650 million dollars.

Although export earnings during the period were 4.13 per cent higher at 1,291.65 million dollars compared to that of 1992-93, the total volume of exports in the sector declined by 4.72 per cent.

What is more alarming, the EPB pointed out, is that earnings from RMG exports to the United States, the single-largest market, during the last fiscal year declined by 109 million dollars to 545.42 million dollars instead of a projected growth of 25 per cent.

Industry circles attributed the decline to increased competition from other countries like Vietnam, Kenya, Colombia and Honduras, and to some domestic problems facing the garments sector.

The BGMEA, meanwhile, has identified 12 problems plaguing the sector and has called for immediate government intervention in solving those.

The association seeks the withdrawal of the 0.5 per cent tax at source imposed on the FOB value of exportable ready-made garments; streamlining of complex customs procedures; allowing duty-free import of all types of fabric, including grey fabric, and other chemicals used in the sector under bonded warehouse facilities.

ties; providing the export-oriented garments industries the same facilities given in the export processing zones; and reinstating the facility allowing imports which have been shipped before opening of a back-to-back letter of credit.

The main problems of the sector relate to fiscal disincentives and administrative bottlenecks, said Redwan Ahmed, adding: "If these problems are solved, we won't have any problem in enhancing our position in the international market."

The BGMEA had earlier set October 24 as the deadline for the government to solve the problems of the garments sector. But last week the association deferred the action programme by another two weeks following assurances from Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman to look into the problems at a meeting with the BGMEA leaders on November 3.

"We are hopeful of a positive outcome from the meeting with the finance minister as it is not very difficult to implement our demands," observed Ahmed.

In addition to the domestic impediments, the non-signing of the Bangladesh-US textiles agreement as well as the implications of the GATT accord and the proposed Harkins Bill in the US Senate have all cast long shadows over the future of the country's most successful industrial sector.

Dissanayake cremated

From Page 1 Col 4

United National Party, said she feared violence may break out during the funeral and appealed to the nation for calm.

Though she was vague about who might try to disrupt the funeral, the implication was that "mischievous elements" of the ruling People's Alliance would create trouble.

A day earlier, Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaratunga denied allegations that her party conspired to kill Dissanayake. She accused the United National Party had a tradition of killing political opponents and that her own life was threatened.

Dissanayake's supporters plastered the city with his pictures and put up flags along the two-kilometer (one-mile) route to the cremation site from the museum where his body has been on display.

Earlier, mourners formed a four-kilometer winding line outside the Mahaweli Center to file past Dissanayake's body.

Police suspect a woman rebel detonated explosives trapped to her body at Dissanayake's campaign rally. At least 35 Tamils have been detained for questioning.

Police have sent samples of the suspected assassin's skin and hair for DNA testing to a laboratory in London.

Prince Charles

From Page 1 Col 5

Save the Queen, because of the effect it may have," said Ken Parfitt, Secretary of the Llanelli Rugby Club.

"Unfortunately there is an element in the crowd who may have jeered or booed at the prince."

The crowd will still sing 'Land of My Fathers,' the Welsh anthem, and the two national anthems of South Africa.

A Buckingham Palace spokeswoman said "it's not necessary to play 'God Save the Queen' in Wales."

"This is the prince's 25th anniversary as Prince of Wales and at many of the events he has attended there, they have only played the Welsh national anthem," said the spokeswoman, speaking on condition of anonymity.

But the Daily Telegraph quoted an unnamed club insider as saying, "Prince Charles is not as popular as he might be in Wales."

"It is a good idea not to sing 'God Save the Queen' because it might give some a focus for their resentment."

FBCCI leaders

From Page 1 Col 7

sector for employment generation and development of the country. "Our plans and policies will be strengthened with your suggestions."

FBCCI President Salman F Rahman mentioned that it was the first time, and during a democratic government, that complete neutrality had been maintained in the Chamber elections.

"The elections were free from any influence although an elected MP also contested," he said, adding that this was proof that democracy is flourishing in the country.

The new FBCCI chief lauded the government's privatisation policy and hoped that they can also become a significant part in the national development effort.

Commerce Minister Shamsul Islam and Industries Minister Zahiruddin Khan were present during the meeting.