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Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day



STOCK MARKET	
DSE Index	845.85 (-0.03%)
Market capitalisation Tk	40.71 billion
Turnover in volume	14,902
Turnover in value Tk	2.37 million

NEWS BRIEFS

Biswas, Khaleda greet Akihito

President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday greeted Emperor Akihito of Japan on the occasion of his birthday today.

Anjuman's function today

President Abdur Rahman Biswas will inaugurate a function marking the completion of the 50th Hijri year of the Anjuman-e-Mohidul Islam at the Osmay Memorial auditorium today. State Minister for Youth and Sports Sadeq Hossain will attend the function as special guests, reports BSS.

Opposition leaders charge at news briefing PM has launched an 'undeclared war'

By Staff Correspondent

The opposition parties in Parliament yesterday alleged that ruling party Chairperson and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia had launched an 'undeclared war' against them by making aggressive comments at this crucial moment.

The ruling BNP has chosen the path of confrontation. The Prime Minister has announced an undeclared war against the opposition parties instead of settling the present crisis amicably. Opposition Chief Whip Mohammad Nasim told a press briefing at Parliament building.

Nasim said that the language the Prime Minister used in her speech in a meeting on Wednesday clearly indicated that the "government has decided to suppress the present movement through repression and confrontation."

"The opposition parties are ready to face the challenge thrown by the BNP," Nasim added.

Before briefing newsmen, the major opposition parties held a closed-door meeting with their parliamentary deputy leader Abdus Samad Azad in the chair.

Senior leaders of the parties were present at the

Nasim said, a four-member committee has been formed to draft a framework to hand over power to the caretaker government. The opposition Deputy Leader will head the committee with Moudud Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta and Maulana Abdus Sobhan as its members.

The committee will submit the draft framework at the next meeting of the combined Opposition scheduled for tomorrow.

The framework and a package of fresh action programmes would be announced at a public rally to be held at the Manik Mia Avenue on December 28.

He said that a letter has been sent from the Opposition requesting Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali to remain present at his office on December 28 to receive the resignation letters from the Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina.

If the Speaker is not present at his office, several thousand people led by the Leader of the Opposition would march towards his residence to submit the resignation letters.

Nasim reiterated the Opposition's decision that the 154

Opposition members would resign en masse from parliament on December 28 if the ruling party failed to accept the demand for a caretaker government to supervise several future general elections.

All opposition members have been asked to remain present at a meeting to be held on December 27 evening at the Sangsad Bhavan.

Nasim urged the people to bear the suffering and inconvenience resulting from the continued agitation programmes of the Opposition in the greater interest of the country.

"We hoped that the elected Prime Minister would continue for another year to complete her full five-year term. But it is evident that she is interested to head a three-month government instead of completing her remaining year," Nasim added.

He said the opposition parties demand the provision for interim caretaker governments to make future general elections free and fair.

"We are going to make history. We are sacrificing our membership to establish an institution to make the national elections free and fair."

BNP leaders meet late into the night

By Staff Correspondent

Senior leaders of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) held a lengthy meeting last night with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair.

The meeting, held at the Cantonment residence of Begum Zia, discussed the political crisis and possible consequences of the threatened mass resignation by the Opposition MPs.

Details of the meeting, which continued well past midnight, were not available.

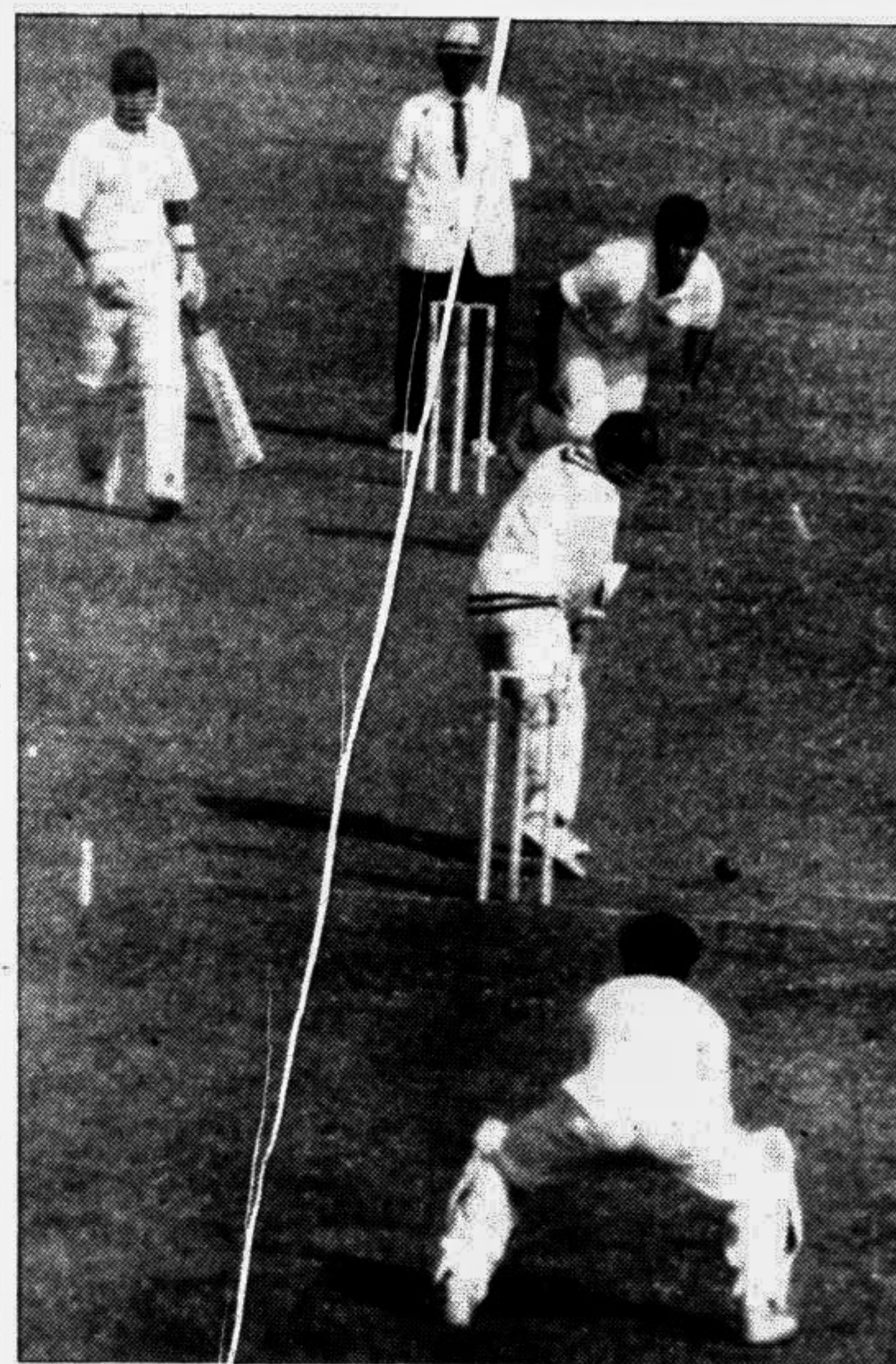
BNP Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukder declined to comment about the subjects of discussion by saying that "We have discussed a different matter which has no real news value."

"We have already made our position clear and the solution is not with us anymore," he told a reporter over telephone.

He said that it was a meeting of the 15-member party standing committee but Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali was also invited to attend the meeting.

Speaker Razzak Ali is reported to have undertaken a personal initiative to resolve the present political impasse.

Earlier, the BNP Secretary General avoided a group of journalists who thronged his official Minto Road residence from midnight last night.



Pakistan wicketkeeper Rifaqat Ali about to take a catch off the bowling of Mohsin Kamal during the SAARC cricket tournament opener at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday. Hosts Bangladesh lost by the barest of margins. India play Sri Lanka today. Details on Page 10.—Star photo

Task force for tackling effects of droughts

The government will constitute a task force with the experts to determine action programmes for tackling the recurring drought problem, reports UNB.

The decision was taken in an interministerial meeting held at Bangladesh Secretariat yesterday with Agriculture and Water Resources Minister M Majid-ul Haq in the chair.

The minister suggested that recommendations of the task force be made keeping in view the environmental and socio-economic aspects.

The task force is to submit its report to the government by January 15 next.

The meeting discussed the extent of damages due to drought in the northern region and ways and means to solve the problem.

According to experts, drought is the result of the Farakka Barrage. All rivers, river channels, haor-baors, ponds and ditches of 16 northern districts become dry every year due to withdrawal of water at Farakka.

Consequently, trees are being destroyed, rainfall is decreasing and the level of ground water is going down. Production of foodgrains is also being hampered due to the drought.

While laying emphasis on adoption and implementation of an integrated plan to face the drought, the agriculture

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3 Indian ministers quit over scandals

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: Three top government ministers indicted by Parliamentary probe panels in India's largest financial scandal and a sugar import muddle resigned today, report AP, AFP.

Lawmakers of the ruling Congress Party had increasingly demanded that Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao fire the three ministers, whose actions were widely blamed for the rout of the party in recent state legislative elections.

Food Minister Kalpana Rai was widely blamed for the sharp rise in prices of sugar when he botched a 800 million dollar sugar import last year.

Health Minister B Shankaranand and Deputy Finance Minister Rameshwar Thakur were blamed by a committee of lawmakers for the 1.7 billion dollar financial scan-

dal. For nearly a week, opposition lawmakers have blocked Parliament's proceedings, demanding that Rao quit for shielding what they called corrupt government ministers.

A Parliamentary investigation last year revealed that Shankaranand and Thakur had violated rules in diverting surplus government funds into the stock market with the help of two brokers.

The seemingly endless infusion of money fuelled a price spiral and attracted hundreds of thousands of investors. When the irregularities were detected in April 1993, the market crashed and bankrupted the investors.

Food Minister Rai was accused of blocking government recommendations to import 1.5

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Some surgeon!

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Dec 22: A three-member enquiry committee has been formed by the authorities of the MAG Osmay Medical College Hospital here to enquire into the incident in which surgeons kept a scissors inside the belly of a patient while performing an operation recently.

The incident was detected yesterday and the committee was formed today.

Dr Rashid-e-Mahbub, Head of the Department of Surgery, heads the committee. The other members are: Dr Quamruzzaman, Head of the Department of Radiology and Dr Matin-ur-Rashid, Head of the Department of Pathology.

Abdul Khaliq, 55, an expatriate from the Middle East now living in Loharpura area of Sylhet town, was admitted to the Medical College Hospital on October 26 for operation under the supervision of Prof Syed Lok.

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Opposition must take blame if democracy falters: PM

By Staff Correspondent

NIKLEE (Kishoreganj), Dec 22: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today warned that the Opposition would be held responsible if democracy is jeopardised and Parliament made inoperative, reports UNB.

"Democracy and a sovereign Parliament have been re-established in the country after a protracted struggle, but they are issuing threats of jeopardising the fruits of the people's struggle," she said hitting out at the Opposition threat to resign from Parliament on December 28 if their demand for a non-partisan caretaker government is not met by December 27.

She was addressing a mammoth public meeting at Niklee thana playground in Kishoreganj district in the afternoon.

Without mentioning the name of the Awami League, Begum Zia said the party had killed democracy earlier and was once again active to kill the hard-earned democracy in league with the "autocratic forces and anti-liberation razzakars".

The Prime Minister observed that the party, while in power, had totally failed to introduce democratic dispensation, the main objective of independence, and ensure food, education and voting right. Instead of establishing democracy, they had killed democracy, introduced one-party rule and killed lakhs of people by creating famine and raising special forces, she told the meeting.

Begum Zia said if that party once again got a chance to assume power, it would destroy the country by turning it into a bottomless basket.

"To assume power they had joined hands with the autocratic regime and anti-liberation forces, but failed because people do not like the party," she said. "They also failed to go to power in a free and fair election."

"Now, finding no other way, they have started agitation. Their agitation is only limited within hartal and blockade which increased the sufferings of commonman and hindered development activities."

The Prime Minister also addressed another huge public meeting at the Jahangirnagar College ground in Mohadevpur thana of Naogaon district this afternoon.

Begum Zia alleged, the Opposition agitation is designed

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Blue panel wins DUTA elections

By DU Correspondent

The pro-Awami League Blue panel won the Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA) elections yesterday by securing nine out of 15 executive committee posts including those of the President and General Secretary.

Prof A T M Zakurul Haq of Economics Department and Prof S M Inamul Haq of Soil Science Department have been elected President and General Secretary respectively. Both are from the Blue panel.

Two other panels — White and Pink — shared the rest six executive body posts.

Three panels, Awami League leaning Blue, BNP and Jamaat leaning White and Left leaning Pink, participated in the DUTA polls held at the University Teachers' Club from 10 am to 2 pm. A total of 837 votes, out of nearly 1100, were cast.

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Supporters of a campaign to carve out a new state in northern India break through barricades in a bid to march towards the Parliament building yesterday, police used water cannons and arrested hundreds of supporters of the campaign for the new state, to be called Uttarakhand. — AFP photo

Adhikary wins vote of confidence

By Staff Correspondent

KATHMANDU, Dec 22: The government of Nepal's communist Prime Minister Manmohan Adhikary won a parliamentary vote of confidence today, the Speaker of the House of Representatives said, reports Reuters.

An overwhelming total of 198 deputies voted in favour of Adhikary's three-and-a-half-week-old government.

No lawmakers voted against the motion and three deputies were absent.

"I hereby declare that the proposal put up by Prime Minister Manmohan Adhikary seeking the confidence of the house has been passed by the House of Representatives," Speaker Ram Chandra Poudel said after the vote.

Adhikary's communist United Marxist-Leninist (UML) Party controls 88 seats in the chamber and needed the support of the opposition to win the vote of confidence.

One-point agitation after Dec 28: Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

FENI, Dec 22: Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina today warned that they would start one-point agitation to oust the government after their resignation from Parliament on December 28, reports UNB.

"We are going to resign en masse from Parliament in our move to establish the voting right of the people," she said reaffirming the decision of the Opposition boycotting Parliament, for long to press its demand for a caretaker government, to conduct general elections.

Addressing a huge public meeting at the Feni Pilot School ground, the Awami League President said her current agitation was to ensure people's right to vote and food and election of an accountable government through a free and fair election under a non-partisan caretaker government.

The desire of the Prime Minister for sticking to power is pushing the country towards confrontation. The lust for power cannot do anything good to the country, said Hasina.

"We want to stop playing ducks and drakes with the voting right of the people," said Hasina, who, on the concluding day of her two-day mass-contact tour of the southern parts of the country, returned from Sandwip by a speed boat and also addressed some ten roadside gatherings on way to Feni.

Pointing out the reported comment of Prime Minister about running Parliament after resignation of the opposition MPs, Hasina reminded that in parliamentary democracy prime minister is not elected

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Mustahid's panel sweeps JUTA polls

By JU Correspondent

The entire panel nominated by Prof Khondakar Mustahid Rahman swept the Jahangirnagar University Teachers' Association (JUTA) election yesterday.

The voting took place at the Teachers' Club from 9 am to 1 pm with Prof Sikandar Dara Shamsuddin as the returning officer.

Two panels contested the election to the 11-member JUTA executive committee. One panel was led by Prof Khondakar Mustahid Rahman, the former president of the FBUTA and JUTA and the other was jointly led by Prof Mesba-Ul-Salehin and Asfar Ahmed.

Professor Enamul Haq Khan of the History Department and AKM Shahnoaz, assistant professor of Archaeology, have been elected president and general secretary respectively. Prof Enamul Haq Khan, former president of the FBUTA, bagged 120 votes while the other contestant Prof Tajul Islam of

See Page 8 Col 5

Papal visit to Lanka in jeopardy

Waruna Karunatilake, Star Correspondent, writes from Colombo

COLOMBO, Dec 22: Sri Lanka's Catholic bishops have moved quickly to try and end the controversy over Pope John Paul's comments on Buddhism in his book 'Crossing the Threshold of Hope' which is threatening to sour the Pope's visit next month.

The Archbishop of Colombo, in a statement, has expressed his deep regret to the Buddhist clergy of Sri Lanka for the misunderstanding over Pope John Paul's comments and appealed for the continuation of the centuries of goodwill and understanding among the followers of various religions in the island.

His statement came after

four leading Buddhist priests had warned that they would boycott the scheduled meeting with the Pope when he visits Sri Lanka next month unless he apologises for the comments he made on Buddhism in his book. Seventy per cent of the 18 million Sri Lankans are Buddhists while Christians make up 7.5 per cent of the population.

The Mahanayake theras of the four main Buddhist chapters in the country, made a strong protest against the comments, saying they were mischievous, misleading and maliciously misinterpreted.

"We can assure our Mahanayake theras and the Buddhist clergy and laity that the

Pope had no intention whatsoever to hurt the feelings of our Buddhist brethren. The Pope respects and admires all that is good in all religions," Nicola Marcos Fernando, Archbishop of Colombo and the President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka, said in his statement.

In a rare joint statement issued to the media last week the Mahanayake theras expressed their profound dismay at the contents of the publication.

"Some of us have already sent words of welcome to His Highness for publication in a souvenir at the request of the Catholic hierarchy of this country. This we did in the

fervent hope that through such mutual respect of different religious creeds in the world, we could unitedly work towards peace everywhere. But we are totally disillusioned and disappointed on the discovery of treacherous acts of undercutting, almost at our doorstep," the strongly worded statement said.

Analysts said the Archbishop's statement was an attempt to clarify matters and stop the issue going any further, which could endanger the Pope's visit.

The Pope in his book called Buddhist philosophy a negative soteriology. "The Buddhist doctrine of salvation consists

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Unrest threatening reforms: Saifur

By Staff Correspondent

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday expressed concern that the current political impasse is threatening the achievements of the economic reform initiatives.

"All of these achievements are being threatened by the present political crisis, exactly when we were starting to reap the benefits of the economic policies," he said.

"I do hope that wisdom prevails over all of us to overcome the political problems hanging over us," he added. "We should not be shortsighted, vision and wisdom should overcome the political differences."

The Finance Minister was

See Page 8 Col 4

Picnic bus overturns: 15 students hurt

By Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 22: At least 15 students of the Bangladesh Institute of Technology (BIT), Chittagong were injured when their picnic bus overturned at Rajakhali on Chittagong-Cox's Bazar road here this morning, reports BSS.

The accident occurred at Rajakhali turning point. Out of 45 students travelling in the bus, 15 including three females received injuries.

Three persons were admitted to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital while the rest were released after first aid.

The condition of Humayun Kabir (Milton), a second year student, was stated to be critical. He received injury in his left leg.