



Assistant Picture Editor of Time Magazine Eleanor Taylor conducted a workshop on 'Print Media and Photo Journalism' at the S M Ali Library in The Daily Star office yesterday.

— Star photo

'NGOs to highlight cause of poor at world confes'

By Staff Correspondent

Ahead of two very important world conferences next year, the private voluntary development organisations, better known as NGOs, say they would try to highlight the causes of the poor, particularly those in South Asia.

Briefing newsmen yesterday on the preparations for the World Summit on Social Development (WSSD) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (WCW), the NGO representatives, however, pointed out that the success of the two conferences would largely depend on how poor countries translate the promises into action.

Association of the Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB), the apex body of the country's NGOs, organised the briefing at its Lalmatia head office in the capital.

The World Summit on Social Development is going to take place in March at Copenhagen, Denmark while the World Conference on Women will start in September in Beijing, China.

Speaking at the press briefing, ADAB leaders said that voluntary development organisations in South Asia have united on broad platform to emphasise the uniqueness of the shared societal and cultural plurality of the region.

The South Asian NGO Declaration on WSSD, known as the Kottia Declaration, has called upon the world community to adopt a 'people-centred' development approach for establishing a society based on an equitable sharing and control of resources, said Zehin Ahmed, Convenor of the NGO group for the WSSD.

The platform of about 56 NGOs of the region would

work together so that the final document of the WSSD reflects the perspective of the poor and the kind of sense of direction they expected, he said.

Several groups have been formed to work out an NGO position paper on Bangladesh for the Social Summit reflecting the people's views on the problems of poverty, employment and social integration, said Khushi Kabir, Chairperson of ADAB.

She said that they were now holding workshops and meetings across the country to assess what people think of their own problems and what are the measures they suggest.

The ADAB leader alleged that the United Nations system, as well as the Western donor agencies, have been trying to put the Social Summit on a low key apparently to sidetrack issues like consumption and resource allocation.

Women's activists and representatives of different women's groups have formed the South Asian Women's Caucus to emphasise the women's central position in all development initiatives.

The group has identified five issues that affect women in the region. These are uniqueness of the economies and environment of South Asia, political empowerment of women, violence against them, trafficking in women and religious fundamentalism and ethnic chauvinism.

Qazi Faruque Ahmed of the Proshika Manobik Unnayan Kendro, ADAB Director Rasheda K. Chowdhury, Dr. Nazma Chowdhury of the Beijing Platform, Tahera Yasmin Huq and Ishrat Shamim also spoke at the press briefing.

'Seek verdict to decide who will conduct polls'

A group of citizens yesterday called upon the government and the Opposition to seek verdict from the people to decide who would conduct future elections, reports BSS.

They said that the politicians are not playing their part as per the rules provided in the Constitution and have failed to evolve a formula acceptable to both the contending sides.

The citizens said that alternative before the people of

DUTA elections

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White panel nominees Prof A F M Yusuf Haider of Physics Department and Prof Anwar Hossain of the Institute of Business Administration were elected Vice-President and Treasurer respectively while Blue panel candidate Dr Md Hossain Mansur of Geology Department was elected Joint Secretary.

The elected executive body members from the Blue panel are Dr A M S Arefin Siddique of Mass Communication and Journalism, Prof Abul Kalam Azad Chowdhury of Pharmacy, Prof M A K M Saad Uddin of Political Science, Prof Khan-dawker Bazul Huq of Management, Prof Muhammed Mosh-huzzaman of Chemistry and Prof Md Shahadat Ali of Zoology Department.

Prof Zinnatunnesa Tahmid Begum of Botany, Prof Tajmery Selima Akter Talukder of Chemistry and Prof Habiba Khatun of Islamic History Department — from White panel and Prof K A M Saad Uddin of Sociology Department — from Pink panel — are the other elected members of the DUTA executive committee.

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HSC results : Reasons of anomalies discovered

By Masud Arif

The computer centre of the Engineering University (BUET) has found out the reasons for withholding the results of a number of students who appeared at the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations held under the four education boards this year.

According to sources concerned, the centre yesterday informed at least 10 reasons to the Dhaka Board authorities for not publishing the results of many students yesterday. Services of the centre were utilised for publication of the results.

Besides, the computer centre authorities hoped that they would be able to inform the reasons for withholding the results of many others of the Comilla, Jessore and Rajshahi boards by tomorrow.

The HSC examination results announced Tuesday created frustration among a large number of students.

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man Ali. He had been suffering from peptic ulcer for long. The resident surgeon of Ward No 2 Dr Pramode Ranjan Singha performed the operation on November 12 in the absence of Prof Ali. But, he completed the operation keeping a scissors inside the patient's belly. The patient was released on December 1.

The patient had been suffering much since then. A number of new ailments forced him to get admitted to the Sylhet Sadar Hospital on December 22. The hospital authorities detected a scissors inside the belly of the patient when he was X-rayed yesterday. The matter was confirmed when he was X-rayed again at a private clinic.

The patient was transferred to the medical college hospital today from the Sadar Hospital for a fresh operation for removing the scissors.

The director of the hospital said necessary steps would be taken against the doctors responsible for this.

Meanwhile, a procession was brought out in the town today demanding stern action against the doctors concerned. Later, a meeting was also held.

The doctors concerned have gone into hiding. It is learnt.

number of students whose results were withheld.

Meanwhile, the computer centre sources said that results of around two per cent examinees of the Dhaka Board and roughly three per cent of three other boards were withheld. A large number of students who were shown absent in the attendance registers of the examination centres might not have been actually absent. Their results were also withheld.

Besides, it was found that a number of students who got 70 or 80 per cent marks in some subjects got only 10 or 15 marks in one subject. Results of those examinees were also withheld. It has now been planned review the grading sheets which were supplied by the board offices, the sources said.

The board authorities also decided to withhold the results of a large number of students for different reasons. The board authorities would now review the reasons given by the computer centre and ask the centre for remedial measures by next week.

Sources concerned hoped that the problems would be resolved within a short time.

JUTA polls

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Economies got 87 votes. Newly elected general secretary AKM Shahneaz bagged 115 votes while the other contestant Afsar Ahmed, the incumbent general secretary, got 91 votes.

The other elected candidates are Prof Abdul Hye of Chemistry, vice president (114 votes); Prof Zaheduddin Mahmud Khan of Botany, treasurer (113 votes); and Jahangir Alam of Electronics — joint secretary.

Prof Khondakar Mustahidur Rahman of Economics has been elected executive committee member bagging the highest number of votes - 136. The other members are Prof Azizul Huq Bhuiyan of Geography, Prof Shaheen M Mahmood of English, Prof Rabindra C Sinha of Physics, Prof Shahabuddin Kabir Chowdhury of Pharmacy and Shamsul Alam Selim of Govt and Politics.



Berlusconi resigns

ROME, Dec 22: Premier Silvio Berlusconi, the media magnate who bulldozed into politics, resigned today after rebellious allies and a corruption probe tore apart his 7-month-old government, reports AP.

The collapse of the government comes a year after Berlusconi launched a conservative political movement to replace the scandal-ridden parties who led Italy since World War II.

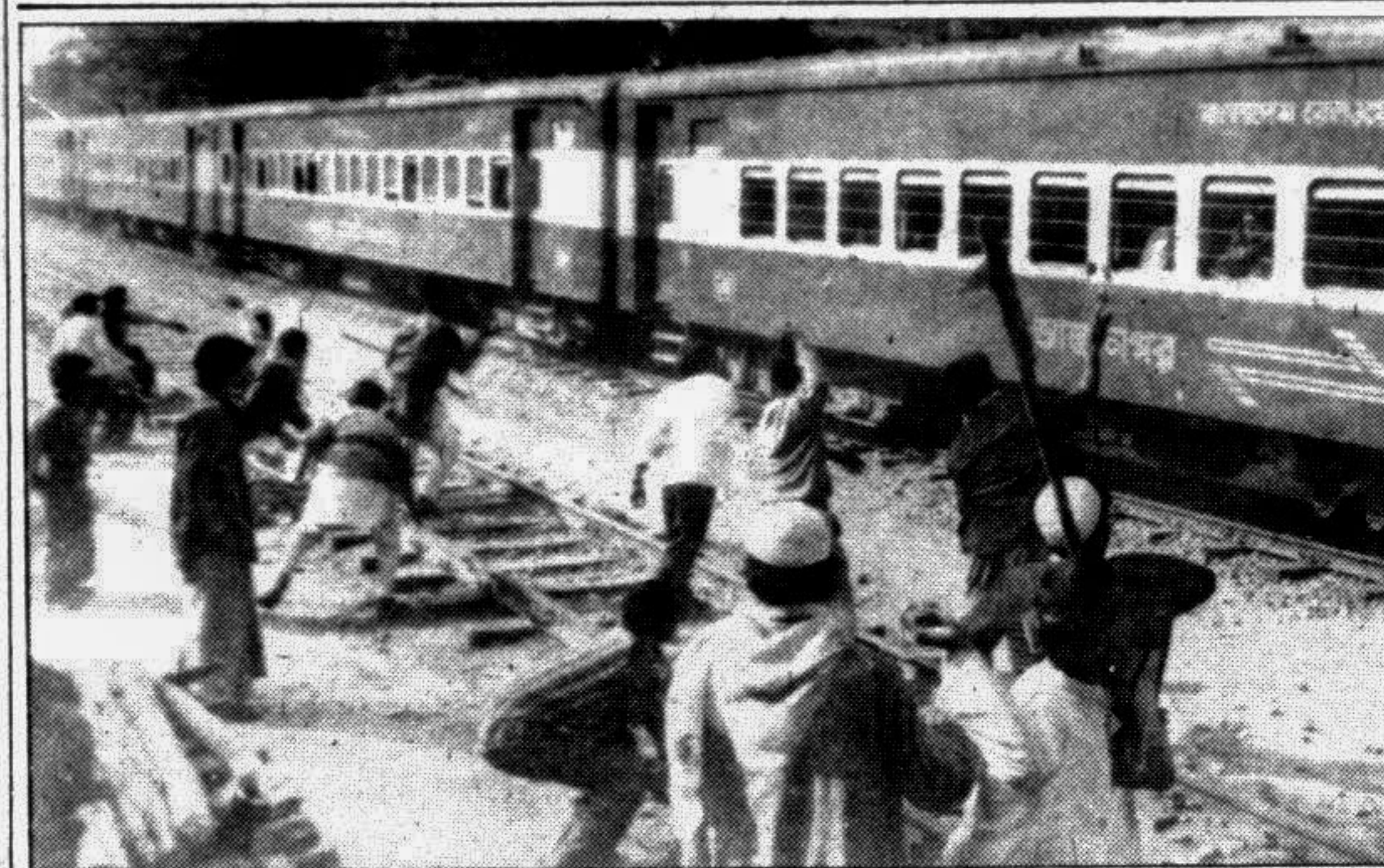
Berlusconi submitted his resignation to President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, who now must decide how to head toward Italy's 54th government since 1945.

Zail Singh in 'grave condition'

CHANDIGARH, Dec 22: The former president, Giani Zail Singh, today remained in a 'grave condition' and had repeated convulsions, which were causing concern to the doctors attending on him in the PGI's Nehru Hospital here, reports PTI.

The hospital medical superintendent, Dr V K Kak, said the Giani had repeated convulsions during the past 24 hours causing concern. The convulsions were controlled with drugs, he said.

He said the supporting systems, including the dialysis, artificial ventilation and the pacemaker, were continuing.



A group of activists pelting stones at a train near the Mahakhali level crossing in the city during yesterday's 'Dhaka siege' programme announced by some religious parties.— Star photo

Unrest threatens reforms

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Earlier, the Finance Minister said that the indirect tax administration — excise, VAT and customs duties — would continue to remain a major part of the country's tax system as the tax base is very narrow.

Identifying the tax system as the "politics of maintaining social harmony" and as an instrument for regulating social conflict, Rahman said "But the tax policy and administration depend on the prevailing political market."

Referring to the Dhaka City Corporation polls debacle for the ruling party, for which his economic policies were blamed by a section of the party, he said "I was put on the frying pan" for the drive by NBR to look into the sources of income of the people who brought expensive cars.

"I have to introduce the tax policies first to the political market and then to the business community," he noted his predicament.

Identifying the two most important fiscal changes in recent years as the introduction of the VAT and import liberalisation, Prof Rahman Sobhan said that the success of the country's fiscal reforms should be evaluated on the basis of how effectively it could infuse competitiveness, raise output and job, and improve income distribution.

The NBR chairman noted that under ideal conditions the indirect tax administration should not be as important in revenue collection as it is now. "I am sorry to inform you

that the share of income tax as a percentage of the total revenue collection will be lower this year compared to the previous year," he said while noting that the country's income tax base consists of only 1.7 lakh individuals, of which 2,000 are from amongst the NBR staff.

He added that the important lesson learned from introducing VAT is that the cascading effect on the economic sectors is removed and also that if the taxpayers are trusted they are unlikely to cheat and the overall system can be improved.

Dr Akbar Ali Khan pointed out that the industrial sector was yet to respond positively to the liberalisation measures and suggested trade facilitation as an effective complementary.

Hasina

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directly. Prime Minister is selected by the elected members of the majority while the members are elected directly by the votes of the people.

Condemning the killing in Feni on December 8, Hasina said, "We have no words to condemn the speech of the Prime Minister on November 28 which instigated terrorism throughout the country."

Ripon, a Chhatra League activist, was killed on December 8 during the hartal enforced by the opposition parties for a caretaker government.

"By instigating the tender-hearted students in terrorism, you will not be able to save your chair," she added.

Islamic group's 'Dhaka siege' partially disrupts traffic in city

By Staff Correspondent

A 'Dhaka Siege' programme called by some Islamic groups yesterday partially disrupted traffic in the capital in the morning hours.

Sammilita Sangram Parishad (combined action committee), a pro-Islam combine of 13 small parties and groups, called the programme to press for their 11-point demand, which included introduction of Shariah laws.

Several hundred activists of the combine staged a sit-in at the rail crossing at Mahakhali. They blocked both road and rail traffic at the crossing. Pickets stoned passing motor cars and vehicles. They also stopped a train bound for Sylhet.

Police used batons and dispersed the pickets at both points and facilitated passage of the trains. At least three BRTC buses, several minibuses and a police van were partially damaged. Police picked up dozens of protesters from various city areas.

Activists of the combine also brought out several small processions at different city points.

Although motorised vehicular traffic, particularly private cars, were few in number on city roads in the morning, their strength increased gradually and city life returned to normal by afternoon.

The Midnight File

Order to release 9 IRA men

DUBLIN, Dec 22: The Irish government has ordered the early release — before Christmas Day — of nine of the 55 members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) currently held in Irish jails, the Justice Ministry said today. The IRA's political wing, Sinn Fein, redoubled its demands for an amnesty for the political prisoners following an IRA ceasefire which came into effect on September 1, reports AFP.

Russia denies sacking of top commanders

MOSCOW, Dec 22: The Russian Defence Ministry today denied reports that top armed forces commanders in the break-away region of Chechnya had been sacked, Itar-Tass news agency said. Ministry officials told Tass the reports — carried by Tass and Ria news agencies — were "disinformation aimed at destabilising the situation in the north Caucasus," reports Reuters.

3 Indian ministers

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million tons of sugar last year and sugar prices doubled. Rao said Rai had acted in good faith.

The probe also criticized Civil Supplies Minister AK Anthony of inaction in this issue. Anthony quit last week, saying the government had ignored his warnings of an impending crisis.

Even though the three ministers, were found guilty by investigation panels, they refused to resign for over a year, saying they had committed no wrong.

In state legislature elections held in November and December, the Congress Party candidates were defeated in three states. That led to a chorus of demands from the Congress members that Rao should fire the ministers to improve the party's image.

Rao's leadership is also under question especially since elections to six state legislatures are to be held in February.

Rao drove to the presidential palace tonight to hand over the resignation letters to President Shankar Dayal Sharma, the ceremonial head of the government.

A presidential palace statement said Sharma accepted the resignations.

Earlier, Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh made the threat at a marathon meeting of Rao's Congress (I) Party in a move seen as a virtual revolt against the Prime Minister, the sources said.

Arjun Singh, the de facto number two in the cabinet, told the meeting that he was tired of

the party's inaction towards ministers accused of corruption and would resign if Rao did not sack his tainted colleagues soon.

Two opposition parties including BJP demanded Rao's resignation and fresh elections, and said the 73-year-old Prime Minister had lost the will to govern, as parliament was immobilised by pandemonium for the eighth day today.

In another development, a member of Parliament for the Cong-I Party was charged today with inciting Hindu mobs to kill minority Sikhs in revenge for the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi 10 years ago.

The Central Bureau of Investigation filed a case in a New Delhi court against Sajjan Kumar and 12 others for involvement in riots that killed 2,700 people, almost all Sikhs. Thousands of others were injured and many Sikh families fled the Indian capital.

Meanwhile, police used water cannons and arrested hundreds of demonstrators here today during a protest by stone-throwing supporters of a campaign to carve out a state in northern India, witnesses said.

Police trained water cannons on the crowd of about 2,000 people after some of the demonstrators began throwing rocks and breaking through barricades in a bid to reach the Parliament building, they said.

They were demanding the creation of a separate state comprising eight hill districts in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh.

Papal visit in jeopardy

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tuted the central point, or rather the only point of this system. Nevertheless, both the Buddhist tradition and methods deriving from it have an almost exclusively negative terminology.

"Do we draw near to God in this way? This is not mentioned in the enlightenment conveyed by Buddha. Buddhism is in large measure an 'atheistic system'. We do not free ourselves from evil through the good that comes from God. We liberate ourselves only through detachment from the world, which is bad, the fullness of such a detachment is not union with God, but what is called 'Nirvana', a state of perfect indifference with regard to the world," the Pope says in his book.

The Archbishop played down the comments, implying it was more due to lack of knowledge of the religion than meant as an insult.

"What has, however, been written in the book in question, has to be taken in the context of the multiple religions that exist in the world. It is not possible and we do not expect, for example, a Buddhist or a member of any other religion to have the same concept or understanding of Jesus Christ or his teachings as we Christians have. Similarly, we Catholics cannot have the same concept as Buddhists regarding Lord Buddha and his teachings. It is a question of perspective," the Archbishop said.

The statement comes as the government was finalising plans for the Pope's two day visit to Sri Lanka. The 74-year old pontiff will arrive on January 20th accompanied by an entourage of 23 officials. The Pope is due to meet leaders of other religions on the 21st morning before taking part in the beatification mass of Reverend Father Joseph Vac, the highlight of the tour.

The four Mahanayake theeros, who are the most important Buddhist religious leaders in the island, threatened to boycott the meeting with the Pope unless he apologises for his comments.

"Through the Catholic church which is primarily sponsoring this visit, the Pope must express his sincere regret to the community whose religious susceptibilities he has outrageously injured," the Mahanayakes said in their statement, calling on the government to take serious note of the issue. "We have decided not to participate in any event connected with his visit. The

State, in acting as the host, to whatever extent on this occasion, must take serious note of this insult hurled at the vast majority of the population in this country," the Mahanayakes warned.

However, the government of President Chandrika Kumaratunga responded by saying the government would accord all formalities according to a head of state and said it would not get involved in the controversy surrounding his remarks on Buddhism.

Almost half a million people including about 2000 pilgrims from Goa and a delegation of 50 bishops from India and other countries in the region were expected to attend the beatification ceremony.

Apologising for the hurt to the feelings of Buddhists in the island caused by the Pope's comments, the Catholic bishops called for reconciliation among all the religions in the island. "We, the Catholic bishops of Sri Lanka do realise, however, that the feelings of our Buddhist brethren and laity have been deeply hurt by some of the contents of this publication. We express our deep regret to each and every one and we hope and pray that the goodwill and understanding that has prevailed all these centuries among the various religious groups of our country will not be disturbed but rather be strengthened further by the compassionate understanding of our Buddhist brethren," the bishops said.

The government would be hoping that the controversy would come to an end after the bishops' statement. It would be in a difficult situation if the Buddhist clergy insist on the Pope himself issuing an apology although the bishops conference said the Pope would make a reference to his comments during the visit.

Task force

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minister urged the officials to ensure normal crop production in the forthcoming boro season.

He directed the officials to take steps for repairing the non-operating tubewells installed by the BADC, different NGOs and farmers all over the country immediately.

Discussions also took place on the foodgrain supply and price situation in different areas of the country.

Agriculture Secretary M Akhtar Ali, Water Resources Secretary Mohammad Nazrul Islam and senior officials of departments concerned were present.