

## US politician lauds Grameen Bank

When Bangladesh won its independence from Pakistan in 1971 Henry Kissinger called it "the basket case of the world."

Kissinger said that because Bangladesh is: (a) Poor. Per capita gross national product is \$155. (b) Illiterate. Only one-third of its citizens can read. (c) Crowded. If all the people in the world lived in the United States, the United States would be as densely populated as Bangladesh. (d) Fast growing. The population (now 122 million) doubles every 25 years, and (e) Disaster prone. In 1991 a cyclone killed 150,000 people on April 29. Ten days later there were as many Bangladeshis as before.

Maybe because of these problems, Muhammad Yunus, a Bangladeshi, economist and banker, has created a bank to combat poverty that works in Bangladesh and is being transplanted to many Asian and African nations-- and to the United States.

The idea is to lend money, without collateral, to the poorest people in the country, mostly women, so they can earn money and improve their lives. They do so, and they pay back the loan, on time, 98 percent of the time. Some commercial banks in Bangladesh have payback rates in the 30 percent range.

The Grameen Bank in Bangladesh has found the secret to this kind of banking. The loans are made to group, usually five people. Group members guarantee the loan and are therefore careful whom they let into the group. The loans are repaid in weekly installments within a year. No bill collectors will call. The payments are made at weekly meetings, in full view of all.

Peer pressure works. Not only is the loan repaid, the borrower must buy a share of Grameen Bank stock (for 25 US cents) and save a small amount weekly.

Grameen is more than a

bank. It is a social movement. Customers must promise to keep their children in school, not drink polluted water, not give dowries when their daughters marry nor take them when their sons marry, plant trees, grow and eat veg-



Prof Md Yunus

establishes, dig latrines. Calisthenics are a part of the group meetings.

Grameen customers are encouraged to found nursery schools. The Grameen Bank operates textile mills and agricultural cooperatives, raises bees, and finances schools and

other enterprises. In 1986, Grameen took over 108 bankrupt fish farms that had been started by the Bangladeshi government and abandoned as failures. Now they are productive and profitable.

Muhammad Yunus earned his doctorate in economics from Vanderbilt University and

returned to Bangladesh in 1972 with, as he is fond of saying, "all the arrogance of a new PhD."

In 1974, when Yunus was head of the Economics Department at Chittagong University, "a horrible famine struck Bangladesh... One could not avoid seeing dead bodies of men, women, children who died of starvation-- a long painful process of death." Yunus later said that was when he "became a drop out from economics."

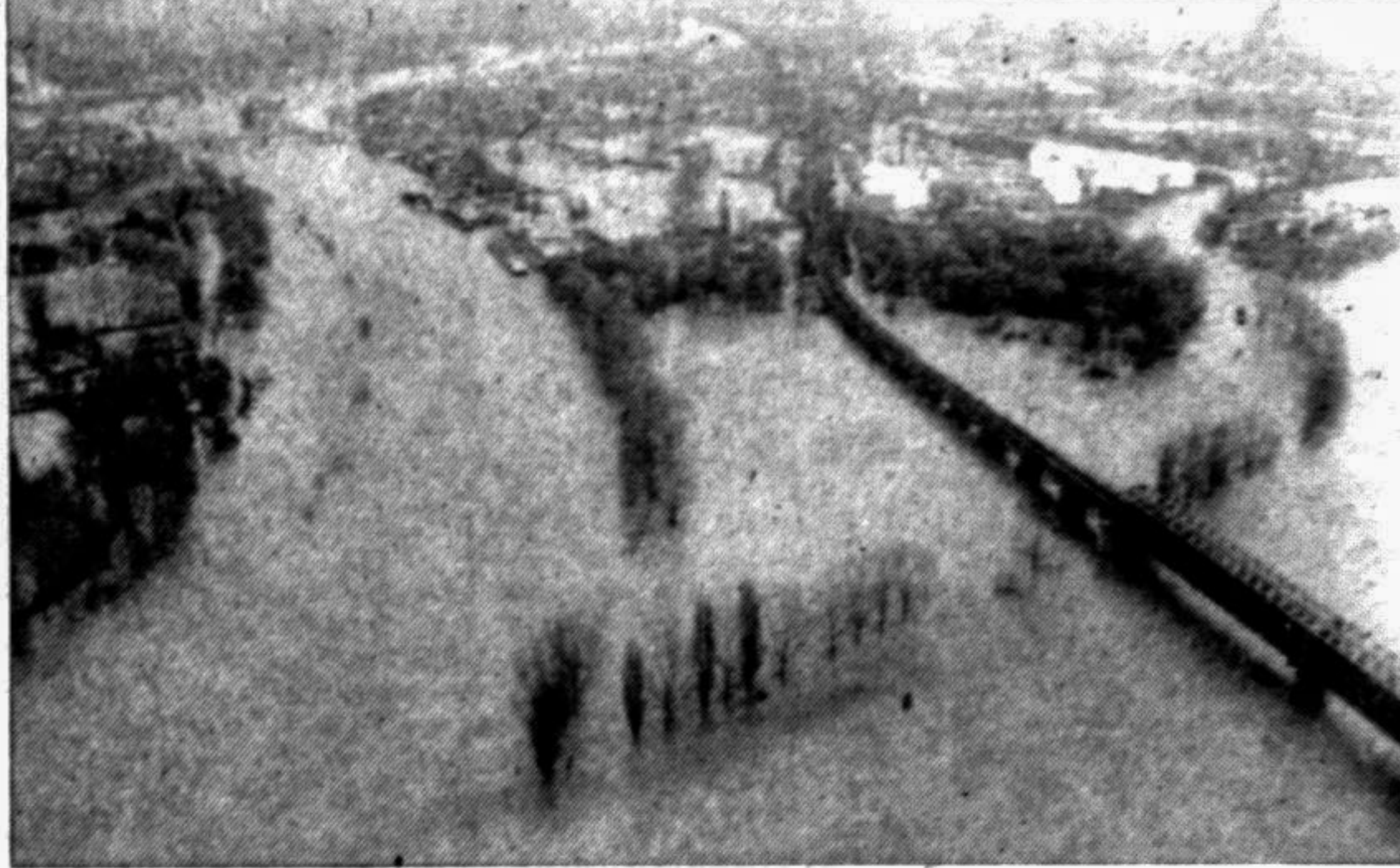
Well, not exactly. In 1976, Yunus began the first pilot project in Jobra, a village near Chittagong. Today, Grameen Bank has 2 million borrowers, 94 percent of whom are women. It has branches in half of Bangladesh's 68,000 villages. Two-thirds of the branches are profitable. The average loan is \$67. Interest is about 20 percent.

Bangladesh may receive more aid per citizen from foreign governments and through private contributions to non-government organizations than any other country in the world. Yunus is skeptical of many aid projects. He says that 75 percent of all the foreign aid received by Bangladesh since its independence in 1971 has gone back to the donor countries as payments to consultants and purchases of commodities and equipment.

This aid money was spent in building roads, bridges, power plants, research institutions and buying equipment for large manufacturing enterprises. The expectation was that this investment will benefit a large number of people...

But, unfortunately, the bottom half of the population... particularly the women... hardly seen any benefit coming to them. Often they are actually harmed by the projects," Yunus says.

Yunus has made a difference, not only in Bangladesh but in the world. Grameen is Bangladesh's most significant export.



The area on the confluence of the Main (L) and the Rhine (down) in Mainz, Germany is under water after the rivers rose following heavy rains yesterday. Extensive damage was caused by flooding of the Rhine, Danube, Mosel, Saar and Main rivers. — AFP photo

## AL memos to EC

From Page 1 Col 5  
The CEC assured them of looking into the matter, said press release of the commission.

Regarding preparation of voters' list, the Awami League said, it is the responsibility of the EC to prepare correct list afresh in accordance with Article 119 of the Constitution.

It was expected that the EC would be active in this regard, the memorandum said, but the EC is yet to do so, except in some pourasabhas and Dapurina union of Mynensingh. The AL memorandum, addressed to the CEC and released to the press stated.

In this connection, the party also referred to a discussion between them and the Chief Election Commissioner when the CEC mentioned that the elections of 1991 were held on the basis of faulty voter list.

The AL memo contradicted an earlier statement of the CEC that preparation of conventional voters' list was not needed if the system of voters' registration, introduction of identity cards and preservation of information on computers were introduced.

"Introduction of a new system is time-consuming. For this reason, we stress the need for preparation of a conventional voters' list," the AL said.

The party said, from the experience of Dapurina and Tongi, it has been proved that the voters' list for all 4405 unions, 105 pourasabhas and four city corporations would not be completed under the

new system even if elections are held as per schedule.

The delegation requested the CEC to inform the AL of the steps taken within seven days since elections are imminent due to the Opposition MPs resignation from Parliament.

With regard to delimitation of parliamentary constituencies, the AL memorandum said, it is mandatory for the EC to go for delimitation of constituencies after every new population census.

The latest delimitation was held in 1984 on the basis of the 1981 census. But there is wide differences in terms of number of voters among the seats, the party said.

The memorandum said, in the general elections of 1991, the average number of voters in each constituency was 2,07,631. But, the number was more than 2,25,000 in 98 constituencies and below 1,75,000 in 73 seats.

The AL also gave a list of constituencies showing that in some cases the number of voters of a particular constituency is almost double that of another constituency.

The party requested the EC to go for fresh delimitation immediately on the basis of the 1991 census report.

The AL delegation included Rahmat Ali, Barrister KS Nabi, Mahbubur Rahman and A K M Fazlul Huq.

Election Commissioner Justice Abdul Jalil, EC Secretary A Z M Shamsul Alam and Additional Secretary S M Zakaria were present at the meeting.

## NDF places 12-pt proposal for fair polls

By Staff Correspondent

The National Democratic Foundation (NDF), an organisation working to promote democratic values in the country, yesterday placed a 12-point proposal to ensure free and fair polls.

At a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club, executive director of the organisation Asaduzzaman Ripon said, a neutral person cannot hold elections impartially unless the Election Commission is given more powers to ensure free and fair polling. The people's cooperation in holding the polls is also essential.

The government of Justice Shahabuddin could hold free and fair polls as people in general and political parties in particular exercised utmost restraint during the elections, Ripon said.

The Chairman of the advisory council of the NDF, Justice Sultan Hossain Khan, a former Vice-Chancellor of Jahangirnagar University, Prof Kazi Saleh Ahmed, Prof Anwarullah Chowdhury and Dr. Latifur Reza of Dhaka University were present at the conference.

## Rickshawpullers, owners clash in Khulna: 20 hurt

KHULNA, Jan 29: Some 20 people, including a police officer, were injured in a clash between the rickshaw pullers and owners at the KD Ghose road in the city today, reports UNB.

Police said the clash between the Rickshaw Owners' Association and the Rickshaw Chalak (puller) Sangram Parishad erupted as their separate processions came face to face at the road at about 11 am.

The processionists were marching towards the City Corporation for submitting memoranda to Mayor Sheikh Tyebur Rahman to realise their respective demands for licence.

## BNP leaders

From Page 1 Col 3

Another minister said that the reply to the HC show cause notice served upon a writ against the Speaker would also be given following today's discussions in Parliament.

## Tk 2 lakh

From Page 1 Col 2

It near the strong room. Returning from the manager's room, the officer found there was only taka five lakh in the bag and the rest two lakh was missing.

Earlier, he took out the money from the Strong Room for transferring the amount to another bank.

A case was registered with Brahmanbaria thana in this connection.

## PIO

From Page 1 Col 4

of the BCS (Information) Association, Harun-ur-Rashid, the court issued the rule upon the Secretary of the Information Ministry, other concerned officials and the present PIO.

The court asked them to show cause why the appointment on contract of the PIO should not be cancelled and the amendment of service rules in this regard should not be declared to have been made without lawful authority.

Appearing on behalf of the petitioner, Barrister Amirul Islam argued that the amendment to the service rules was autocratic and discriminatory and was disrupting the main objective of the service rules.

The petition noted that the service rule was amended on March 5, 1992 and the present PIO Abdur Rahim was appointed under a two year contract. The contract was subsequently extended by a year last year and the term expires on March 8 next.

## The Midnight File

### Heavy fighting in Bihac

SARAJEVO, Jan 29: Heavy fighting erupted in northwest Bosnia today as anti-government forces launched an infantry push south of Velika Kladusa in the Bihac pocket, a UN spokesman reported here. Alexander Ivanko said UN monitors in the region recorded 701 detonations between 0700 and 1500 GMT as dissident Muslims under Fikret Abdic, backed by rebel Serbs from Croatia, drove south, reports AFP.

### Ecuadoran forces down

#### Peruvian chopper

QUITO, Jan 29: Ecuadoran forces shot down a Peruvian helicopter today, the fourth day of clashes in the border dispute between the two countries, administration officials said. A statement from administration spokesman Enrique Proano said seven Peruvian soldiers were killed in the escalating conflict Sunday and that an Ecuadoran soldier was wounded, reports AFP.

### JS proper place to resolve crisis: Shamsul Islam

Commerce and Information Minister M Shamsul Islam yesterday said the Jatiya Sangsad is the only proper place for overcoming any crisis through discussion, reports BSS.

The minister was speaking as chief guest at a seminar on "Reflection of existing politics on socio-economic condition of Bangladesh: Probable actions" organised by the Bangladesh Citizens Rights Parishad at the Pioneer auditorium in the capital.

Noting the anxiety of the general public regarding the political situation, the commerce minister said the question of economic emancipation is obviously linked to political stability. He said, "Despite political differences we have to be united for improving the socio-economic condition of the people."

Referring to the hartals and other destructive programmes of the opposition parties, the commerce minister said everyone has to rethink about this system of practising democracy by destroying people's property.

Saying that politics and the economy are complementary, Islam said the government alone cannot be held responsible for protecting civil liberties; the Opposition, too, must be equally responsible.

### HC bench

From Page 1 Col 5

leader Moulana Motiur Rahman Nizami -- praying for the hearing of the writs by a larger or special bench.

The order constituting the larger bench was communicated to the respective judges by the secretary of the Chief Justice yesterday at 10:15 am.

The applications for referring the writs to Chief Justice for a larger bench were filed on January 23 while the bench comprising Justice A M Mahmudur Rahman and Justice M Hamidul Huq sent the matter to the chief on January 26.

The first writ petition was filed by Advocate Towfiq Hossain challenging the constitutionality and legal validity of the en masse resignations by the 147 MPs December 28 and demanded that the said resignations should be declared illegal.

The other writ, against the Speaker and the Secretary of the Parliament Secretariat, was filed by Alauddin Khaled challenging the respondents' delay in disposing of the resignation letters of the MPs.

The HC bench on January 18 issued rule upon the Speaker of Parliament, the Secretary of the Parliament Secretariat, leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina, Jatiya Party leader Barrister Moudud Ahmed and Jamaat leader Moulana Motiur Rahman Nizami to show cause.

The bench also asked the Speaker not to pass any opinion about the MP's resignations.

### Dudayev

From Page 1 Col 4

area around the central Minutka Square. ITAR-Tass news agency said.

In a report from neighbouring Ingushetia, it said there had been no major changes on the ground in the battle between Russian troops and Chechen rebels.

It also quoted a Russian deputy minister for emergency situations as saying it would take at least three years and several trillion roubles (millions of dollars) to repair those parts of Grozny destroyed in seven weeks of fighting.

### Industrial park

From Page 1 Col 4

ifen said it is the most 'suitable location' for such a project and the Asian countries can benefit from it.

The AIP Management and Development company has already set up an office in Dhaka and will open another in Chittagong soon.

As regards investment climate and potentials in Bangladesh, Haji Arifen maintained that the country is 'very suitable' for investment and the prospect is bright.

## Hasina at city rally

From Page 1 Col 7

The city AL organised the meeting as part of the Opposition's demonstration programme throughout the country yesterday. Chaired by Reazuddin Ahmed, the rally was also addressed by other AL leaders including Zillur Rahman, Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzak and Matia Choudhury.

Referring to her latest proposal for an advisory council under the President to super-charge the next general elections Hasina said, "We want the members of the proposed advisory council to be neutral and non-partisan and selected by both the sides. But the ruling party, accepting the idea of advisory council, wants the council to comprise Parliament members."

The BNP is agreeable to the idea of an advisory council but not a non-party government, a pre-requisite for free and fair polls. The AL chief said, adding that after the en masse resignation of Opposition MPs, they had no scope to be inducted in the advisory council. The proposed President-led advisory council would fail to ensure free and fair polls if it was formed with partisan people, she said.

Hasina said, "Our demand is clear. We want the Prime Minister to resign with the announcement of the schedule of the next election and it must

be held under a non-party administration."

She renewed her pledge to continue the on-going agitation until the Opposition demand was met. The ruling party was politicising the administration and looking for ways to rig the next polls, she said.

Referring to the just-held by-elections to four Parliament seats, the AL chief said people did not take part in the farcial polls. Those declared elected in the so-called by-elections have become "illegal MPs", she added. Minister's statement by calling it "treaty a slavery" while her FM called it a friendship treaty. "If she feels it is a treaty for slavery, then why she has not scrapped it in her last four years' rule."

Reiterating her party's decision on the issue, Hasina said, "If voted to power we will not renew the treaty."

The AL chief condemned the killings during the recent barricade and strike programmes of the industrial workers and reminded the ruling party of its support to the workers before coming to power. She also criticised the BNP government for "violating its agreements with the labour bodies and others" and protested the price rise of essentials.

A procession was brought out later and it paraded different city streets.

## HC rule on Speaker

From Page 1 Col 7

ment," said the notice which Razzak Ali read out in the House yesterday.

An HC bench issued a ruling on January 18 asking the Speaker to show cause within seven days why actions should not be taken, as required by the Constitution, on the resignation letters of the 147 opposition MPs submitted on December 28.

The court had also asked the Speaker to refrain from his decision on the issue within 10 days.

The Speaker neither responded to the HC ruling nor gave his decision.

A number of ruling party MPs yesterday took part in the discussion on the inaugural speech of the President in the House. Minister for Fisheries and Livestock Abdullah Al-Noman tabled a bill titled, The Protection and Conservation of Fish (Amendment) Bill 1995.

### Speaker's ruling sought

BSS adds, Chief Whip Khondaker Delwar Hossain yesterday sought ruling of the Speaker to safeguard the privileges of the Parliament and the members of Parliament against "unnecessary interference" of the court.

Rising on a point of order the Chief Whip referred to two separate rule nisi issued by High Court bench of the Supreme Court in which the Speaker was asked to refrain from taking any decision on the issue of en masse resigna-

tion of the Opposition parliament members and to show cause within seven days why he took so long time in taking any decision on the issue.

Quoting Article 67(2) and 78 of the Constitution and rules 177 and 178 of the Rules of Procedure the Chief Whip said the court had no authority to interfere in the proceedings of Parliament and the authority of the Speaker.

He said that there were constitutional provisions to safeguard the privileges of the Parliament in all countries including India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, England, Japan and Canada.

He said every organ of the state should work in its own jurisdiction without confrontation with each other for the welfare of the people.

The Speaker informed the House that he will study the case.

### Fishing boats

From Page 1 Col 3

Abdur Rahim, 33 -- were still missing, said Kabiruddin.

He said, the pirates boarded a trawler chased three vessels -- F. B. Aman, F. B. Minara and F. B. Jamshed -- in deep sea and at one stage, they looted fish, fishing nets and money.

One of the ill-fated fishing boats, reached shore while the whereabouts of the other two could not be ascertained, Kabir added.

## James P Grant

From Page 1 Col 8

emphasised simple, low-cost methods of improving pediatric health, such as immunisation and oral rehydration.

Since 1980, when he took over as head of UNICEF, the percentage of children receiving immunisations in the developing world has risen from 20 per cent to 80 per cent.

Grant travelled the world, meeting with more than 100 government leaders. He always carried a packet of oral rehydration salts in his pocket, as well as a note on the number of children killed by preventable diseases.

"Very few men or women ever have the opportunity to do as much good in the world as James Grant; and very few have ever grasped that opportunity with such complete and dedicated commitment," UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said in a statement on Saturday.

Grant was born in Beijing on May 22, 1922. He graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in 1943 and Harvard University Law School in 1951.

### Khaleda shocked

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday condoled the death of James P. Grant.

In a message sent to UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali the Prime Minister said Grant's untimely death would be mourned by all in Bangladesh.

Describing him as "a man of clear vision, dedication and boundless sympathy", Begum Zia said Grant had brought new life to the UNICEF and expanded its services to children all over the world particularly to those in the developing world.

### Stranded Pakistanis will court arrest tomorrow

From Page 1 Col 5

"Stranded Pakistanis will court arrest at the CMM court tomorrow to press Pakistan for immediately arranging their repatriation, they announced in Dhaka yesterday, reports UNB.

The Stranded Pakistanis General Repatriation Committee (SPGRC) will bring out a torch procession this evening in the city to drum up the programme.

### Ctg killings

From Page 1 Col 8

immediate arrest of the killers of Ahsanullah Apel. The outdoor services at the Chittagong Medical College Hospital remained closed today following Chhatra Dal's call for an indefinite strike protesting the attack on Ahsan.

Meanwhile, protesting the killing of its leader Md Ali at Fatikchhari the BCL gave a call for observing strike in northern Chittagong on February 1 and in entire Chittagong on February 9.

Security has been tightened here to prevent any violence.

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Election Commissioner Justice Abdul Jalil, EC Secretary A Z M Shamsul Alam and Additional Secretary S M Zakaria were present at the meeting.

## Cong (I) leaders meet to resolve rift in party

NEW DELHI, Jan 29: Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao's top Congress (I) leaders began a meeting here on Sunday to try and put a lid on a volatile struggle for power in the ruling party ahead of make-or-break polls, reports AFP.

Rao's Congress Working Committee (CWC), the party's highest policy-making body, met amid high speculation that the move to stem the squabbling could end with the expulsion of the premier's main Congress rival, Arjun Singh.

The CWC, which includes prominent backers of Arjun Singh, is slated to debate a withdrawal of Congress support to a centrist opposition alliance ruling the northern state of Uttar Pradesh.

"Arjun Singh is not on the official agenda," a party source said. "But the issue of his expulsion could figure if someone chooses to raise it," he said and added a showdown between loyalists and dissidents could not be ruled out.

Anticipating possible action against him, Arjun Singh, who has raised the banner of revolt since his Christmas Eve resignation from Rao's federal cabinet, called on the premier to defer any step against him until February 6.

"But in case you personally

### Trade fair

From Page 1 Col 5

ets crossed Taka 40 lakh until the end of the fair.

Although many foreign participants termed the customs duties on the imported items as exorbitant, the customs officials said that all the taxes were imposed in accordance with the existing laws of the country. So far Tk 30 lakh has been collected from the customs duties, it was learnt.

For many small enterprises of the country, the 23-day-long DTF '95 unfolded new horizons of business prospects.

Exposed to such international event for the first time, toy manufacturers, handicraft producers, biscuit companies and other small ventures signed up unspecified number of contracts with foreign buyers, according to organisers.

A Dhaka-based NGO, Banaj Bannal Ltd, signed up a contract worth US dollars 20,000 with an US company for supplying jamdani saris, nakshi kantha and other woven wears.