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Table with 2 columns: Index, Value. DSE Index: 820.38 (+1.11%), Market capitalisation Tk: 39.62 billion, Turnover in volume: 12953.75, Turnover in value Tk: 23.22 million

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NEWS BRIEFS

PM visits ailing BNP leader

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday visited the CMH to see the condition of Alhaj Ali Kader, Jessore District BNP vice-president, who was injured in a miscreant attack at Benapole on January 21. The BNP leader was first admitted to the Jessore Sadar Hospital in critical condition and later shifted to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka on January 23, reports UNB.

Khodeza Azam sworn in as PSC member

Acting Additional Secretary of the Social Welfare Ministry Begum Khodeza Azam was sworn in as a member of the Public Service Commission (PSC) yesterday, an official handout said. Chief Justice Mohammad Habibur Rahman conducted the oath of office at a simple ceremony at the Supreme Court Bhaban, reports BSS.

IU exams postponed

JHENIDAH, Feb 6: The Islamic University authorities today postponed examinations of all the departments due to indefinite strike on the Jhenidah-Kushtia road, reports UNB.

Indian medicine seized

SIRAJGANJ, Feb 6: Police seized Indian medicine worth about Tk one lakh from a Dhaka-bound train here early today. The medicine, including 175 bottles of Phenidyl, was recovered, reports UNB.

Schri, Ifar Timings

Table with 4 columns: Day, Date, Schri, Ifar. Row 1: 6, 7, —, 5:52. Row 2: 7, 8, 5:16, 5:53. Row 3: 8, 9, 5:16, 5:53.

9.32 lakh tonnes of rice to be imported

By S Y Bakht

Rice imports would total 9.32 lakh metric tonnes to make up for a projected 5.72 lakh MT annual production shortfall in 1994-95 because of severe droughts in many parts of the country, official estimates indicate.

The updated rice production figures were included in the government-instituted task force report on drought which was presented to the Agriculture Minister last Saturday.

According to the updated Agriculture Ministry projections released this week, the foodgrain production is estimated to stand at 186 lakh MT

during the current fiscal, down from the actual production of 191.72 lakh MT in 1993-94.

Like recent years, no rice import was required last fiscal as the output was adequate to meet domestic demand and only 14 lakh MT of wheat, a traditional shortfall area, was imported. In fact, a good quantity of fine variety rice was even exported for the first time during the year.

The rice production shortfall in the ongoing fiscal is being attributed to the droughts in most rice growing regions caused by poor rainfall in mid-94 and the resultant shortage

in surface and underground water levels projected during the current dry season.

A drop in the aman and boro production would mainly result in the shortfall while aus and wheat output would increase slightly, according to the Agriculture Ministry figures.

During the current fiscal, aman production is estimated to be 90.42 lakh MT and boro 64 lakh MT as against an actual production of 94.19 lakh MT and 67.72 lakh MT respectively in 1993-94.

Preliminary estimates of See Page 12 Col 1

Speaker's statements self-contradictory, says ALCWC

Awami League central working committee (ALCWC) yesterday said the Speaker's suspension of decision regarding the resignation letters of opposition MPs is aimed at implementing the decision of the ruling BNP, reports UNB.

The Speaker's statements and deeds are self-contradictory," said a resolution of the ALCWC meeting.

It said the Speaker took the resignation issue to the court in a bid to give more time to the ruling party. The Speaker's delaying tactics has curbed the sovereignty of Parliament and made the office of the Speaker controversial.

The meeting further said the "partisan outlook and irresponsibility" of the Speaker are now being shifted to the court.

It said: The Speaker's See Page 12 Col 3

Hearing of writs on MPs' resignations Hasina's counsel questions maintainability

By Supreme Court Correspondent

The counsel for Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina in the writ relating to the opposition MPs' en masse resignation, submitted before a special bench of the High Court yesterday that the petition challenging resignations was filed with mala fide intention only to create a constitutional crisis in the country.

During the fourth day's hearing on the writ, Barrister K S Nabi continued his submission, opposing the maintainability of the case. He said that the writ was also premature since the resignation letters were still pending with the Speaker.

Analogous hearing of the two writ petitions relating to the mass resignation by 147 opposition members of Parliament on December 28 last

year began Wednesday before a three-man special bench comprising Justice A M Mahmudur Rahman, Justice Kazi Ebadul Huq and Justice Md Abdul Karim.

The first writ was filed by one Tawfiq Hossain challenging the legality of the wholesale resignations while the other writ, filed by one Alauddin Khaled, challenges the Speaker's delay in disposing of the resignation letters.

Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali, opposition leaders Sheikh Hasina, Moudud Ahmed and Matiur Rahman Nizami were made respondents, among others, in both the writs.

The writs have been transferred from a two-man division bench to a special bench constituted by the Chief Justice See Page 12 Col 6

A privilege is a privilege!

By Staff Correspondent

While a decision regarding the validity of the resignation letters of the Opposition MPs remains pending with the Speaker, the parliament secretariat finds itself in a dilemma regarding the applications of four resigning members seeking to import duty-free cars.

According to Parliament Secretariat sources four MPs who, along with 143 opposition legislators submitted their resignation letters on December 28 last, have applied for the Speaker's endorsement regarding their privilege to import vehicles without customs and other duties.

The highly placed source, speaking on condition of anonymity, however declined See Page 12, Col 8

Bus-tempo collision kills 14 in Chittagong

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Feb 6: At least 14 persons were killed and one was injured when a bus and an auto-tempo collided head on at Munshipukur Par on Chittagong-Hathazari road this morning, police said.

Of those killed 12 died on the spot and two on way to hospital.

The victims including three children and two aged women were identified as Sujit Chandra Pal (12), Mithun Chandra Pal (26), Prabir Chandra Pal (28), Uttam Kumar Pal (6), Sudha Rani Pal (72), Bimal Pal (50), Supria Pal (22), Rina Rani Pal (30), Sadhana Rani Pal (30), Kaisosallya Pal (40), Nipa Pal

(2), Banu Pal (75) and driver of the tempo Abdul Manttan and helper Afsar Hossain, who succumbed to their injuries on way to hospital.

Most of them belonged to the same family, police said.

The injured was admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

The mishap occurred when a tempo bound for Fatikchhari collided head on with a passenger bus bound for the city from Nazirhat.

The victims — all passengers of the tempo — were going to Fatikchhari to attend a post-marriage feast (Baubhat).

The tempo was badly damaged and the bus was seized by

Hathazari police. The driver of the bus fled.

In another accident, two people were killed and 40 injured in a road mishap at Jaypura bus stand in Dhamsrai thana in Savar today, police said.

Abdul Gafur (30) died on the spot and an unidentified young man succumbed to his injuries on way to a local hospital. The injured were sent to Dhamsrai Health Complex and different hospital of Dhaka.

The incident occurred when a Dhaka-bound night coach from Sathkhira skidded off the road at Jaypura bus stand on the Dhaka-Aricha highway at about 11 am.

Time will say why the matter is with the court

By Asiuzzaman

Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali has said only time will say why the negotiation between the ruling party and the Opposition failed and why the matter is now with the court.

"You know many things which you already reported. But there are many things not yet revealed," Razzak Ali told The Daily Star in an interview at his official residence last night.

He said it is now clear and has already been reported in the press why I delayed my decision on the resignation letters of 147 opposition MPs.

Both the sides reached a consensus. They prepared the draft of an agreement. But unfortunately it was not signed," the Speaker said adding, "It was the latest development after the submission of the resignation letters." See Page 12 Col 7

Speaker faces criticism from within party

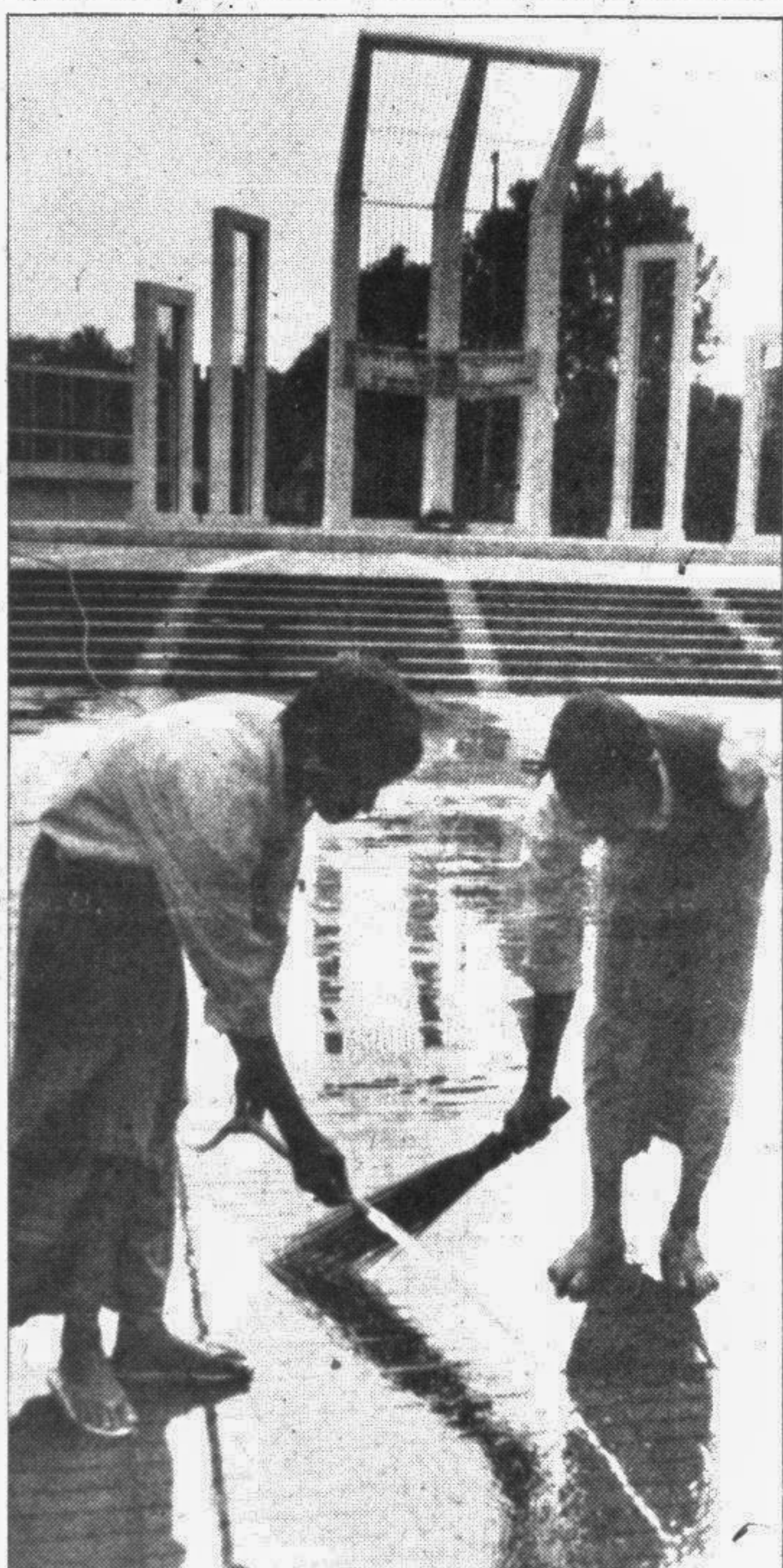
Star Report

Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali has been facing criticism from within the ruling party for his delay in delivering the decision on the resignation letters of 147 opposition MPs, BNP sources said.

The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) also requested the Speaker to fight the court battle to settle the issue of resignations, a senior BNP leader told The Daily Star.

The court rule was issued after 21 days of submission of the resignation letters. It is a long time. The Speaker could have given his decision by that period," the source, a minister, said.

Speaker Razzak Ali reports See Page 12, Col 3



Workmen cleaning the Central Shaheed Minar area yesterday as part of a face-lift in preparation for the observance of Amar Ekushey programmes there on February 21. — Star photo

Cabinet okays plan to set up judicial training institute

The Cabinet yesterday approved the proposal to set up a judicial training institute to impart training to judicial officers and other officers of courts, reports BSS.

The approval was given at the weekly Cabinet meeting held at Bangabhaban with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair.

The Cabinet also approved the proposal to renew the lease of the seven thousand acres of coastal land in Cox's Bazar belonging to the fisheries department for shrimp cultivation.

The meeting decided to import salt in the event of possible shortfall in the production of salt. The Cabinet also approved the guidelines for leasing out non-agricultural khas lands.

Mirza Hafiz won't table bill on voters' ID cards

By Staff Correspondent

Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Mirza Golam Hafiz yesterday informed Parliament that he would not table the bill for withholding the provision of identity cards for voters.

"I will reverse what I said yesterday. I would not like to introduce the bill. I am withdrawing it," he told the House.

On Sunday, the Law Minister tried to introduce a bill to keep in abeyance the earlier decision of issuing ID cards to voters. In the face of opposition from the treasury bench MPs, the minister later sought the Speaker's order to defer the bill.

According to a law enacted late last year, the voters should be given ID cards for casting vote in any election. But later, an ordinance was promulgated for holding four by-elections. See Page 12 Col 1

Outgoing Foreign Secy tells Daily Star Investors' response encouraging

By M Anwarul Haq

Creating international awareness about investment opportunities in Bangladesh has been one of the most remarkable successes of the country's foreign policy in the recent times.

"Bangladesh has been able to draw global attention in terms of wooing foreign investments in the recent times," said Mufleh R Osmany, the outgoing Foreign Secretary, in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star yesterday.

Osmany leaves Dhaka tomorrow for Ottawa to take up his new assignment as High Commissioner to Canada.

Osmany expressed his candid views on the country's foreign policy goals and objectives and also his own impressions

about establishing professionalism in the diplomatic corps.

Having served as Foreign Secretary for 14 months, Osmany is being succeeded by Farooq Sobhan, presently High Commissioner to India, who would be the 17th Foreign Secretary since independence.

Emphasising that Bangladesh's foreign policy "is dynamic and on the right course," Osmany said around 1,00,000 Myanmar refugees had gone back in 1994 alone raising the Rohingya repatriation figure to nearly 1,60,000.

Two batches of Chakma refugees have also returned to Bangladesh recently, he said.

Speaking on relations with India, Osmany said the government continued serious ef-

orts to persuade New Delhi to solve the question of sharing the waters of common rivers including the Ganges. "We have also made our friends sensitive about the issue."

Asked if any immediate or long term solution of the water sharing issue could be expected, the Foreign Secretary replied: "Where there is a political will, there will be a practical way. India being a larger country would naturally be expected to show more goodwill and political understanding."

On extending port facilities to India, Osmany said it was contingent upon the wishes of the people of Bangladesh.

About the wisdom of taking See Page 12 Col 3

Nurses begin 48-hr strike

By Staff Correspondent

All Class Four employees and nurses in the government hospitals in the country went on a 48-hours strike yesterday morning demanding cancellation of the Centre for Management Excellence and Quality Assurance Programme (CMEQA).

According to a hospital source, the employees and nurses on strike announced the programme fearing autonomy in the hospitals, they believed, would give autonomy to the hospitals, the source added.

Earlier the government announced the CMEQA programme See Page 12 Col 1

Bills passed: Wider power, pay rise for Ansars

Three bills including two relating to Ansars and battalion were passed by the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday with measures for reorganising this auxiliary body of the police and the armed forces and to provide its members with better facilities, reports BSS.

The bills called the Ansar Bahini Bill, 1995, and the Battalion Ansar Bill, 1995, provided wider power for maintenance of law and order and to curb the activities detrimental to national economic interest, as the auxiliary body of the police while for defence of the country they would work in aid of the defence forces.

The House also passed the Village Defence Party Bill, 1995, all the three being piloted by Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury.

After passage of the two Ansars bills, a treasury bench member, Abdur Rob Chowdhury told the House that the democratically elected government should be commended for giving improved facilities to the Ansars. He said the government had been working relentlessly for the welfare of all the sections of the general masses. He also referred to the recent problem at the Ansars headquarters and the action taken by the government See Page 12 Col 8

Zafar refused permission to leave country

By Court Correspondent

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM), Dhaka, yesterday ordered former prime minister Kazi Zafar Ahmed not to leave the country before the hearing of a corruption case against him on February 14.

CMM Shahiduddin Ahmed issued the order after Kazi Zafar, who is out on bail, had moved the court for permission to leave the country for a medical check-up.

District and Sessions Judge M Abdus Salam had granted ad interim bail to Zafar on Sunday and fixed February 14 for hearing of a corruption case lodged against the former See Page 12 Col 4



Striking nurses sitting on the corridor of the Out Patients' Department of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital on the first day of their 48-hour countrywide strike yesterday. — Star photo

Govt offers revised incentives for Chakma refugees

The government has announced revised incentives for the tribal refugees returning home from Indian state of Tripura, reports BSS.

An official announcement said in Dhaka yesterday that the government had revised the incentives considering the prevailing situation in the Chittagong hill districts and to expedite their return and rehabilitation.

The revised incentives included guarantee of security of life and property of all citizens including the tribals as per the Constitution and laws and provision of one-time house building and agriculture grant of Taka 10,000 for every re-

turning tribal family. Besides, all returning families will get 5 kg and 2.5 kg of rice for an adult and a child respectively for 26 weeks, and 4 kg pulses, 2 kg soyabean oil, and 2 kg salt per family for 6 months. Two bundles of C.I. sheets for each family and Taka 8,000 for those who have arable land to purchase two cows.

Besides, the government decision to exempt agricultural credits up to Tk 5000 will be applicable to all returning refugees. The loan issued to 700 tribal families worth Taka 20,50,000 will be waived on their return after proper verifications and the general amnesty declared up to

October 31, 1994 in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) area by the government will be applicable for all emergency cases and warrants of arrest in undecided cases.

The incentives also included return of all landed property to the returning refugees and tribals who will not be rehabilitated in cluster villages. Reappointment to their jobs including their seniority and other benefits will also be considered sympathetically.

Steps will be taken to take SSC and HSC examinations of those students returning with equivalent Indian certificates. Returning students will also be

given the opportunity to get re-admission into schools and colleges.

Besides CI sheets, certain quantity of timber will be provided for all returning families for building houses. The government will also consider relaxation of age limit for returnees.

Three members of Parliament, (1) Rashed Khan Menon (Bakerganj-2), (2) Mohammad Shajahan Chowdhury (Chittagong-14) and (3) Mohammad Shajahan Chowdhury (Cox's Bazar-4) will be included in the repatriation committee of tribal refugees.

Legal steps will be taken on the basis of the nature of cases

as per laws to consider that the case instituted against those members of Shantibahini during the time of previous government, could be brought under general amnesty.

In keeping with the prevailing situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, withdrawal of camps in phases from civilian areas will be considered. All returning headmen will get back their previous positions.

Meanwhile, 1,027 tribal refugee families with 5,186 members have so far returned home under official arrangement in two phases, the special affairs division of the Prime Minister's secretariat said in a statement yesterday.

Besides, 109 tribal refugee families with 565 members returned home in other way, the statement said.

All repatriated tribal families got back their lands as also a grant of Taka 10,000 each as promised by the government.

No death of mobil

CHITTAGONG, Feb 6: There is no death of mobil in the country at present, a Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) press release said here tonight, reports BSS.

The BPC also said that the supply of mobil was quite satisfactory and there was no cause for any concern.

Jute, textile workers warned of 'legal actions'

Owners of the private sector jute and textile mills yesterday (Monday) warned of "all legal actions" against the workers if they go for any "illegal" strikes, reports UNB.

The warning came from a joint meeting of Bangladesh Jute Mills Association (BJMA), Bangladesh Jute Spinners Association (BJSA) and Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA).

The meeting discussed the present labour situation which already resulted in nine days of "illegal" strikes with a threat of four-day continuous strike See Page 12 Col 5