

People on the horns of dilemma Whom shall I elect?

By Govinda Shil and Rafiq Hasan back from Dinajpur

"Whom shall I elect?" said a shop-owner, Monirul Haq at Tetulia in Dinajpur district. "I have no choice because the opposition political parties have boycotted (the election)" he said when asked about the ensuing parliamentary election.

About voters turnout speculations by the ruling BNP and the Opposition are wide apart. The ruling party leaders in Dinajpur expect 40 to 50 per cent turnout while those of the Opposition say it will be 10 to 15 per cent.

"I don't expect even 20 per cent," said Ahsan Habib Bulbul who withdrew as an independent candidate from Thakurgaon-3 constituency. Habib told these correspondents that he withdrew because he thought the February 15 election would be meaningless for the country and for democracy as well.

"I hope 40 to 50 per cent voters will exercise their voting rights," said Doctor Malek, a BNP candidate from Thakurgaon-3.

Malek, 60, who joined BNP recently, while talking to The Daily Star claimed that people of his constituency were enthusiastic about the election.

Mirza Rafiqul Islam, an Awami League leader and president of Thakurgaon Bar Association claimed that the voters turnout would not be more than 10 per cent.

"People are generally enthusiastic about elections, but this time it has become quite discouraging to them."

There is no instance of such an uncontested election in the country," Islam said adding "this has overshadowed Ershad's 1988 election."

Rafiqul said Awami League was organising people at the grass-roots level against the 'farceful election'.

"BNP is a city-based party which has no grass-roots level committees to organise the election," said S M Azizul Haque, acting president of the Jatiya Party in Thakurgaon district. He said that JP was holding regular meetings at the union and village levels to convince the people not to go to the polling centres. "In Pirganj thana, I can say, less than 10 per cent vote will be cast," he said.

President of Thakurgaon Press Club, Akhter Hossain Raja said that people of Thakurgaon were 'disappointed' with the activities of the ruling party. The BNP has nominated fertilizer dealers in the election, he alleged.

Khurshid Zahan Huq, a former parliament member from Dinajpur alleged that the AL, JP, and Jamaat-e-Islami were trying to mislead the innocent voters. "No conspiracy against election will be successful," Khurshid Zahan asserted adding "If



Members of the combined force cordoned the Dhaka University campus during raid on the halls yesterday.

Dr Kamal warns of 'ominous game' of confrontation

By Staff Correspondent

Gano Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain has blasted both the ruling party and the mainstream Opposition for the chaotic situation in the country now and renewed his call for a national dialogue to reach a consensus for resolving the lingering political crisis.

Addressing a press conference at the party's central office in the city yesterday Dr Kamal called upon the people to remain alert about the 'ominous game' of confrontation and violence between the government and the major opposition parties.

The Forum held the press briefing following its two-day central committee meeting that ended yesterday. The party's highest decision-making body reviewed the political developments in the country.

Dr Kamal said an election not acceptable to the people is going to be held on February 15 and urged the people to refrain from exercising their franchise and non-cooperate with all those involved in violent activities, no matter whether in support of or against the holding of polls.

"Violence in the name of upholding the Constitution or in the name of resisting the elections is unconstitutional. Damaging property in the name of democracy is also unconstitutional," said the Gano Forum President.

Once all parties agree to sit for a dialogue there can be a way out, he said in reply to a question.

Dr Kamal alleged that the role of armed forces was being made controversial by the way the forces were being used. He, however, declined to raise a demand for taking the army back to the barracks, just saying that the "present situation and the situation in 1970 are not the same."

Criticising Awami League, he said that the party has lost

DU halls

From Page 1

till 11 am as hawkers were not allowed to enter the area till then.

The security men recovered two magazines of stengun, a toy pistol and some bullets from Zahurul Haq Hall, two cocktails, part of a cut-rifle and a tool for digging roads from Ziaur Rahman Hall.

Two sets of walkie talkie from Surja Sen Hall and a ramdoo and a machete from Jasim Uddin Hall.

Campus sources said the Army personnel looked for some known students but none of them was available.

The outsiders and the armed cadres reportedly left the dormitories much ahead of the raid, on Thursday evening, as the news of the possible raid spread in the university halls.

Students who entered the halls late Thursday night faced obstacle at the gates of some halls, campus sources said.

Meanwhile, Ganotantrik Chhatra Oikya and Awami League-backed Chhatra League held separate rallies in the TSC area yesterday, representing the raid in the halls.

The Midnight File

Taliban rockets kill six

ISLAMABAD, Feb 9: Six people were killed and six others wounded by rockets fired into Kabul by the Islamic Taliban militia today, government-controlled radio reported. Kabul Radio, monitored in Islamabad, said government planes bombed Taliban positions south of the Afghan capital after the rocket strike, inflicting an undetermined number of casualties, reports Reuter.

Test in 13 govt colleges Mar 1

21000 will vie for MBBS admission

By Ripon Baig

About 21,000 students will sit for the admission test in the medical colleges in the country to be held on March 1.

The number was about 23,000 last year.

There are 1450 seats in first year MBBS class in the 13 government medical colleges.

According to the new rules introduced this year, students securing at least 1300 marks in the SSC and HSC examinations can apply for admission. Previously the requirement was 1200 marks.

This year the admission test will carry 100 marks — Physics, Chemistry and Biology, 30 marks each and English, 10 marks. Ten marks will be for the viva voce.

Besides, four per cent from the SSC marks and five per cent from the HSC marks will be added to the marks secured in the admission test.

The students who passed the SSC and HSC examinations in 1992 and 1994 can also apply for admission along with the regular students. No marks will be deducted for such irregular students. Students can appear in the test three times.

Policeman killed

From Page 1

rescue him as an uneasy calm prevailed in the area on the day, said witnesses.

Police on duty there rescued the DG when insisted by some passers-by and took him to the DMCH, they added.

Army likely to be deployed at key establishments

By Staff Correspondent

The government is likely to deploy military and paramilitary forces at important government establishments as security measures due to volatile political situation in the country.

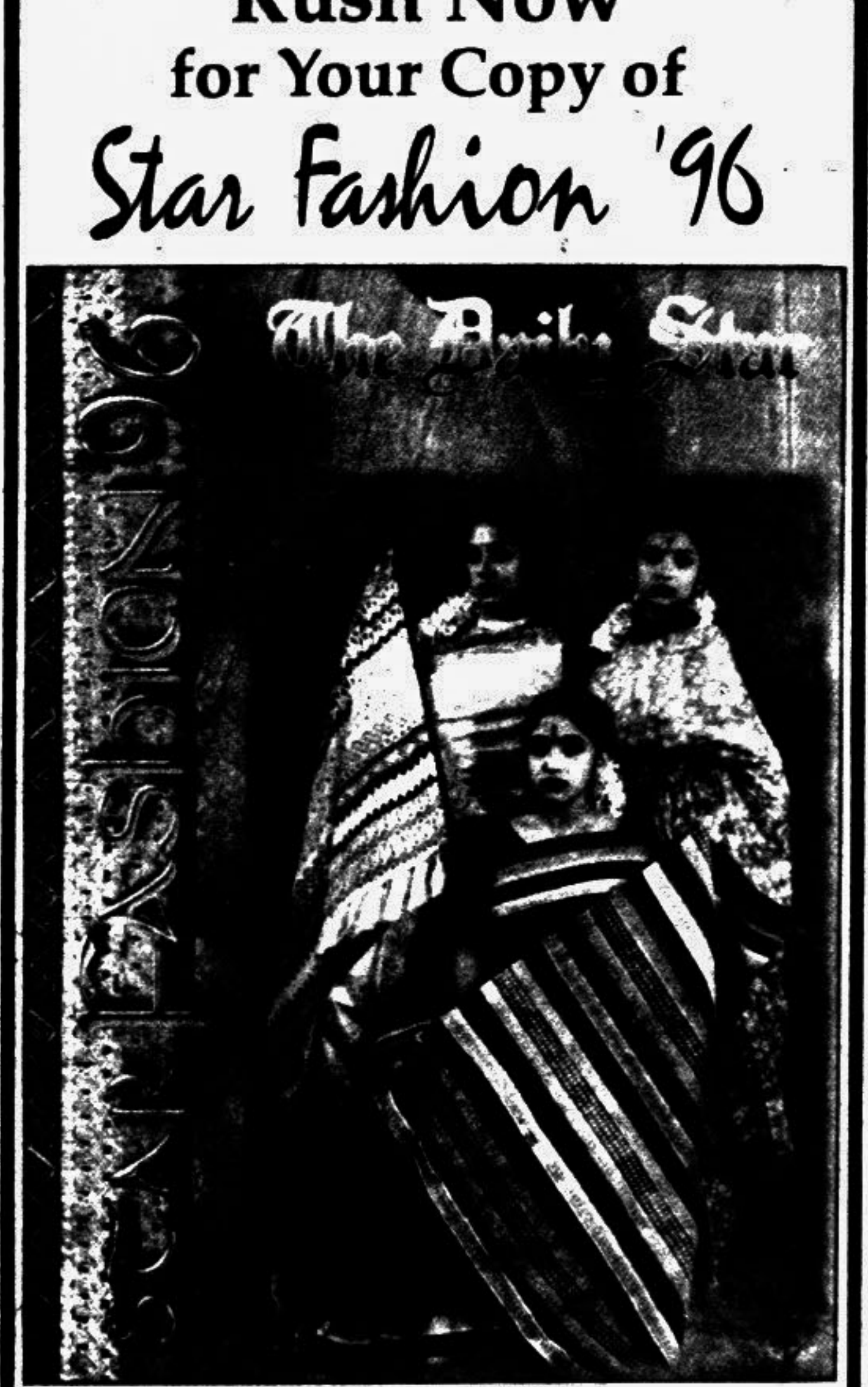
Well-placed government sources said Army have already been deployed at the secretariat of the Election Commission and its branch offices and important markets and petrol pumps in the capital, according to Probe news agency.

Earlier, the army were deployed at the head office of Radio Bangladesh at Agargaon, radio office at Shahbagh and television centre at Rampura. Besides, there are 240 other 'key establishments' including Bangladesh Secretariat and Atomic Energy Commission where the government may take similar measures.

Greek army chief sacked

ATHENS, Feb 9: Greece's Socialist government sacked the armed forces chief of staff, Admiral Christos Lyberis, on Thursday for his handling of a military stand-off with Turkey in the Aegean Sea last week, reports Reuter.

Rush Now for Your Copy of Star Fashion '96



The colourful Daily Star Fashion Special for which you've been waiting so long is in the stands from last Sunday. Ask your hawk for a copy or get it from nearest newsstand. Price of this beautiful tabloid is only Tk 20.00.

SIB introduces series of new schemes

By Staff Correspondent

Social Investment Bank (SIB) will introduce a number of new schemes including concessional financing of consumer durables for newly married couples and fixed income groups and shelter finance for the first home owners.

Chairman of the joint-venture Islamic Shariah-based Bank Prof M A Mannan announced introduction of the new schemes of the SIB at a press conference at a city hotel yesterday.

The management of the Bank, which started operation in November last, also plans to open four branches by the next month at Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna and Sylhet.

The newly introduced schemes are: Scheme for concessional financing of consumer durables for newly married couples, rotating family savings and credit net and group instalment credit scheme, shelter finance scheme, A to Z investment services for Bangladeshis living abroad, new local entrepreneur and foreigners; and Hajj management scheme.

"Many youths cannot enter into married life owing to financial constraints. Unwanted pressure is given on parents of bride for dowry. Through our scheme, we want to facilitate procure-

Notice

Our weekly feature — Down To Earth — could not be published today because of unavoidable factors.

Opposition

From Page 1

night, said the ban was a clear violation of fundamental rights and of articles 36, 37, 38 and 26 of the Constitution.

AL plans to hold its rally at Manik Mia Avenue at 2 pm while JP and Jamaat are to hold rallies at the same time at Pantha Path and Moghbazar crossing respectively. After the rallies, they are scheduled to march towards the PM's residence in separate processions.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is scheduled to leave for Rajshahi this morning as part of her election campaign tour.

3 teams arrive

From Page 1

sociation of Bengal (CAB) and the Pakistan-India-Lanka Committee (PILCOM) received the teams.

Most of the other teams like Pakistan, Sri Lanka, New Zealand, United Arab Emirates, England and South Africa are expected tonight.

West Indies and Australia are scheduled to arrive tomorrow.

Reuter adds: Ten thousand policemen, sniffer dogs and bomb detectors are being used to guard top players and officials at the World Cup opening ceremony.

The game's most prestigious limited-overs tournament is waiting for a carnival start in front of 100,000 fans as organisers and world cricket chiefs try to resolve a crisis that threatens the credibility of the showpiece.

Australia's and West Indies' refusal to play their matches in Sri Lanka because of security fears, following last week's Colombo bomb blast that killed up to 80 people, has rocked the 12-team event starting next Wednesday.

Deadlock hit the subcontinental competition spread across thousands of kilometres as the organisers turned down a request by Australia and West Indies to change their match venue to outside of Sri Lanka.

Officials of the PILCOM, banking on millions of cricket fans and television viewers to produce a revenue of 100 million dollars, were beginning talks with International Cricket Council (ICC) chiefs today to find a way out of the impasse.

Rajshahi: One killed

From Page 1

Thursday, died at the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital at about 5 am today.

Today's clashes ensued when police intercepted an Opposition *lathi* procession at Shaheb Bazar at about 5 pm.

Police fired bullets, rubber bullets and fired tear gas shells to disperse the processionists who also threw handmade bombs at police. The clashes spread to Gokanpara, Malopara, Battar More and Kumarpara. Old Bus Stand areas.

About 5-30 pm, police and BDR controlled the situation.

Mintu, 26, a worker of a decorator shop at Gokanpara was hit with a bullet at about 5-15 pm and died on the spot. Ten persons were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital with bullet and bomb injuries. Police arrested more than 20 people during the clashes. Namaz-e-Janaja of Nahidul Haq Titu was held at 3-15 pm today in front of the Jame Mosque at Sonadighi crossing near BNP office. The *janaja* was attended by Barrister Aminul Haq, State Minister for Establishment, Mizanur Rahman Minu, Mayor of Rajshahi City Corporation, Advocate Shahidul Haq Khan, father of Titu and other local BNP leaders. The body of Titu was sent to his father's residence in North Shajahanpur in Dhaka city along with his parents.

Namaz-e-Janaja of Rafiqul Islam who was killed in a bomb blast yesterday was also held simultaneously and he was buried in the Tikapara graveyard.

12 killed as trains collide with trucks in Egypt

CAIRO, Feb 9: Twelve people were killed and 15 injured when two trains rammed into passenger-filled pick-up trucks in identical accidents at level crossings in Egypt, Egyptian newspapers reported today, reports Reuter.

Both truck drivers had ignored warning signals at the crossings and the trains were unable to stop, the papers said.

They said nine people were killed and at least eight injured when the first train travelling from Alexandria to Cairo hit a truck speeding through the Markaz Kafr el Zayat level crossing on Thursday afternoon.

The train's locomotive overturned and burst into flames on impact and several cars were derailed disrupting traffic for many hours, they added.

On Thursday morning, another train collided with a truck driving through the In-sha village level crossing in northern Beherah Province. Three women were killed and seven others were injured.

2 killed in pre-polls violence

From Page 1

and a half hours.

Our Sirajganj Correspondent reported that at least three persons were injured in clashes between activists of BNP and opposition parties in the town yesterday.

Hundreds of crackers were blasted and a series of clashes took place between the supporters of BNP and opposition AL, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami in the evening centring the Prime Minister's planned election tour of the town.

Begum Zia is contesting in the polls from Sirajganj-2 constituency.

Earlier, the BNP and AL brought out separate militant processions in the town. According to witnesses, some BNP processionists hurled at least 15 hand bombs on the residences of AL vice president Golam Kibria, Jubo League joint secretary Belal Hossain and BCL leader Raja Khan.

Professional groups back polls

From Page 1

More than 2,000 professionals of different groups, including physicians, engineers, school, college and university teachers, lawyers, agriculturalists, journalists, businessmen, film actors, and radio and TV artists, were present. Some poets and litterateurs also attended.

The professionals urged the Prime Minister to take adequate security measures for them so that they could discharge their election duties and also for the voters to cast their ballots without any fear.

They demanded strict legal action against the 'hoodlums unleashed by some election-boycotting parties' creating anarchy through acts of terrorism.

The leaders of the professional groups further demanded legal action against those threatening the voters and resorting to a reign of terror in a bid to foil the elections.

They extended full support to the current stand of Prime Minister Begum Zia for maintaining the constitutional process at any cost.

President of Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers' Association (FBUTA) Prof Aminul Islam, President of Dhaka Medical College Teachers' Association Prof Rashidul Alam and Prof Shawkat Ara Belal, and General Secretary of FBUTA Dr Siddique Islam spoke on the occasion.

The Prime Minister said the opposition parties, as expected by the people, had failed to play a responsible role and instead chosen the path of violence and anarchy in the name of establishing democracy.

"Politicians must not push the country towards confrontation and destruction," she said. "Both the government and opposition parties have equal role in ensuring peace and maintaining democratic rule in the country."

Teachers' Samity Sahrifur Islam, Secretary General of the Primary Teachers' Samity Abdul Awal Khan, Dhaka District Ainjibi Samity Secretary Makhul Hossain Fakir, dramatist Ariful Haq, Rajshahi University teachers Prof Rashidul Alam and Prof Shawkat Ara Belal, and General Secretary of FBUTA Dr Siddique Islam spoke on the occasion.

Begum Zia said despite repeated calls for discussion to resolve the political problems, "some opposition parties" instead of coming forward, decided to boycott the polls, and were now attempting to foil the national elections.

She apprised the professionals about the ruling party's efforts to solve the political problems and explained the current situation.

The Prime Minister told the professionals that the country would fall into a disastrous constitutional crisis if it fails to hold the elections by February 21.

BNP Vice Chairman Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury, Food and Agriculture Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Commerce and Information Minister M Shamsul Islam, Post and telecommunications Minister Tariqul Islam and Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar were present.