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## Foreign secy tells AmCham meeting in city Sub-regional cooperation to open up scope for mega-projects

By Staff Correspondent

The idea of sub-regional cooperation mooted by Bangladesh and India has tremendous potential for turning Bangladesh and the adjoining region into a powerhouse of development and investment, Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan said yesterday.

Foreign investors, including those from the US, can take advantage of mega-projects that would eventually be generated from such intensified economic cooperation," he said.

The foreign secretary was speaking on US-Bangladesh relations at the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh (AmCham) as a guest of honour. President of the Association Forrest Cookson, Executive Director Abdul

Gafur and US ambassador to Bangladesh David N. Merrill were present on the occasion. A large number of persons connected with US business in Bangladesh were present.

Farooq Sobhan hoped that the US would take interest in such sub-regional cooperation.

He said that there was definitely scope for sub-regional cooperation without upsetting the process of regional cooperation.

There were instances of such cooperation among countries in other regions too, he added and referred to the ASEAN.

He said sub-regional cooperation will ultimately open up opportunities for gigantic projects involving high technology, in which foreign companies, including those from the US could participate. It will primarily focus on projects while SAARC will project separate identity of the region like that of ASEAN.

The foreign secretary termed US-Bangladesh relations very special, growing stronger in economic and commercial fields. He mentioned that four agreements for investments in the oil and energy sector involving US companies were due for signing shortly. The US companies are Occidental, Unocal, Halliburton and Mobil.

Farooq Sobhan said that the inter-action between Bangladesh and the US would continue to be enlarged as more Bangladesh students now study there while many have settled there. He, however, expressed the hope that there would be more inter-action between

Bangladesh and US business leaders.

He referred to the setting up of a Bangladesh caucus in the US Congress at the initiative of US Congressman Bill Richardson, who is now the new US representative to the UN. The visit of the Bangladesh Prime Minister to the US, besides her address at the UNGA and meeting with representatives of UN organisations also helped focus investment opportunities for US investors in Bangladesh.

The foreign secretary said the government looked forward to the visit of US Assistant Secretary Robin Raphael to Dhaka on January 25 and was happy to note that Dhaka had been selected as venue for the meeting of five regional US envoys during the visit.

Responding to a question from an AmCham member about difficulty in procuring long-stay Bangladesh visas for businessmen from Singapore, the foreign secretary said the Bangladesh missions will be given instructions immediately so that six month multiple visas are issued, without bureaucratic hassle, to businessmen for commercial visits.

## Ershad granted bail

From Page 1

smuggling.

He was interned on December 12, 1990, six days after he was forced to resign, facing a mass-uprising that ended his nearly nine year-old regime. He had seized power in a bloodless coup on March 24, 1982.

After the 45-minute proceedings, a full bench of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, headed by Chief Justice ATM Afzal granted the ad-interim bail with leave to appeal, our Supreme Court reporter said. The bench comprised of Justice Mostafa Kamal, Justice Latifur Rahman, Justice M. A. Rauf and Justice B. B. Roy Chowdhury.

Yesterday's appeal was moved by Khandaker Mahbub Hossain and Barrister Rafiqul Huq, who pleaded that their client, a member of parliament and former president, suffering from ill health at the age of about 69, would not jump bail, or temper with the prosecution as observed by the special district additional judge, who had rejected his first bail prayer on the radar purchase case earlier in November.

Subsequently, the lower court's observations were upheld by the High Court when Ershad's lawyers appealed against the cancellation of bail.

However, the defence contention was opposed by Deputy Attorney General Shahabuddin Ahmed, who was asked by the court if he was opposing the bail prayer. The DAC said that Ershad might not be available for trial if he was enlarged on bail.

But the court observed that if there was any possibility that he would not be available for trial, there could be legal and security measures against that and pronounced the verdict of ad-interim bail.

The news of bail was conveyed to Ershad personally by the team of his lawyers who went to his temporary jail, a villa on the precinct of the Jatiya Sangsad where he was

taken to attend on parole, the opening session of the seventh parliament that began on July 14, 1996. His lawyers moved for his bail in the radar purchase case since August.

"Truth and law prevailed," a beaming Ershad told the lawyers and Jatiya Party secretary general Anwar Hossain Manju, who is also the communications minister. Some party MPs also visited him.

A group of jubilant JP supporters staged a joyous procession in central Dhaka after having the news.

There were joyous processions also in Rangpur, Ershad's home district where he was elected MP from five constituencies.

In one case, Ershad was sentenced to ten years imprisonment on June 12, 1991 on charge of possessing unauthorised fire arms.

But he was acquitted by High Court in June, 1995.

He was sentenced to seven years imprisonment in a corruption case involving acquiring DIT plot by fraudulent means to build a tower, named after his party organ, Daily Janata.

He was sentenced for six years in two other corruption cases involving purchase of relief boats from Japan and keeping unaccounted cash of about Tk two crore in his bedroom during his arrest.

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## Thai-Malaysian talks on illegal immigrants soon

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 8:

Thai and Malaysian officials said Tuesday they will hold talks on joint efforts to stem the flow of illegal immigrants across Thailand's border into Malaysia, reports AP.

Malaysia says an estimated one million illegal workers have been drawn by the promise of jobs in its booming economy, which is growing by 8 per cent a year and relies heavily on foreign labour.

Most of the illegal immigrants are Indonesian and arrive by boat, but others include Bangladeshis who cross the 300-kilometer long border after entering Thailand on tourist visas.

"We will see how we can stop this," Thai Foreign Minister Prachaub Chaiyasarn said at a news conference with his Malaysian counterpart, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

No date has been set for the talks.

After chasing a group of youths, police recovered a grenade from inside Bangla Academy in the city, reports UNB.

Police said a group of youths came to Bangla Academy from the Shubbari direction and were gossiping there at about 3 pm. On information police rushed to the spot.

The youths fled towards Shubbari. Later, police recovered the oval-size grenade of five inch diameter and deposited to Ramna thana.

When asked, Ramna police said it was yet to be confirmed if the grenade was live. "The recovered grenade was kept at thana and it will be given to army to examine," said a police official.

But he declined to relate recent attack on Bangla Academy to the recovery of the grenade.

John Major

From Page 1

Bangladesh.

He will also take the opportunity to raise proposals for increasing sale of British products.

The talks will be followed by signing of an agreement on exploration and exploitation of natural gas in the coastal belt of Bangladesh.

AFP adds: John Major left London yesterday with representatives of 50 British companies on a six-day trade mission to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The Foreign Office said Major is due in Calcutta today where he would meet Indian Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda and make keynote speech to an Indo-British partnership chapter of the confederation of Indian industries and watch a cricket match at the British-built Eden's Garden Stadium.

He was to visit British-Indian joint business ventures in Bangalore tomorrow and go to Bangladesh on Saturday for a meeting with President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

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## The Daily Star

### Police to have dog squad Massive offensive against terrorists soon: Rafiq

Home Minister Rafiqul Islam hinted that the government would soon launch a massive offensive against the terrorists, reports UNB.

"Wait and see, a very big thing is coming," he told a group of newsmen on board a navy ship after commissioning the Bangladesh Coastguard's Chittagong Base on Tuesday.

The minister would not elaborate on the government's crackdown plan.

Islam disclosed that the Home Ministry had sought a fund of Tk 1000 crore to spend in next five years for the modernisation of police, purchase equipment and vehicles.

Besides, he said, a dog squad would be created for police and tender for importing special dogs be floated shortly.

In the first phase, 20 dogs will be imported and their handlers recruited. Both the dogs and handlers will be given proper training which will take some two years, he said.

Two types of dogs will be imported — one type for sniffing to

detect drugs and explosives and the other for tracking.

About smuggling, the minister said huge fertiliser was being smuggled out from the country through Cox's Bazar while foreign cigarettes, salt and illegal arms were coming into the country.

Another huge quantity of phensidyl is being smuggled in from India, he said, informing that during his recent meeting with Indian Home Minister, they had agreed to stop phensidyl smuggling, and woman and child trafficking.

He said the tobacco industry, which pays revenue to the tune of Tk 1400 crore a year to the exchequer, was facing serious problem because of the smuggling of foreign-brand cigarettes through Chittagong area.

"I'll instruct the authorities concerned that I don't want to see any foreign-made cigarettes in this belt," he said, adding all types of smuggling should be checked for the betterment of the country.

Army not involved in Bangabandhu killing: PM

COMILLA, Jan 8: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina dismissed as stuff and nonsense the evil propaganda that the Awami League would not strengthen the army and reiterated her determination to build a strong armed force, reports UNB.

"Some heinous killers with a high ambition to be established in the national politics tried to link the army with the hated killing of Bangabandhu and carried out misleading propaganda," she said.

They, she said, tried to whip up a controversy and confusion dishing out the false propaganda that the 'Rakkhi Bahini' was established as rivals to the army, she told officers, JCOs and Jawans of the 33 Infantry Division here this morning.

"There was no connection of the responsible officials of the armed forces with some disgruntled army officers who were involved in the heinous conspiracy of killing Bangabandhu. My government and all members of the Awami League believe this truth as the nation believed it."

The Prime Minister said her government would build a well-equipped, skilled and modern armed forces to safeguard the country's sovereignty and independence.

Earlier, the Prime Minister, in battle fatigue, witnessed a winter-exercise of the 33 Infantry Division at Lalmai. A mock fight was demonstrated by the army where Air Force fighter planes took part to give it a realistic touch.

Major General Shaul Afzal, Comilla Area Commander, gave a brief on the winter exercise and history of the 33 Infantry Division.

Home Minister Major (ret'd) Rafiqul Islam, Chief Whip Abdul Hasnat Abdullah, Col (ret'd) Farooque Khan, local MPs and Army Chief Lt General Mahbubur Rahman were present on the occasion.

Train links

From Page 1

M. V. Sher-e-Bangla, however, returned to Bahadurabad ghat but another ferry boat is still in mid-stream having failed to reform to the Teesta-mukh ghat due to heavy siltation of the channel at Katlaimati.

Bangladesh Railway is now operating trains between Dinajpur and Teestamukh ghat and between Dhaka and Bahadurabad ghat. Passengers are being advised to cross the river at their own risk. The railway authorities said they are trying to resume the ferry services from Balashi.

Meanwhile, a half-day hartal was observed at Bonarpura Railway station and in the Shaghata Thana headquarters today protesting the reported decision to remove the Railway junction from Bonarpura.

more goals to effectively seal the fate of the match.

In the 61st minute it was yet another Leandro corner from the left side which produced the third goal. The ball was feebly punched back by Ponir and after three attempts by the Indonesians which were beaten back one way or the other Cameroonian forward Musa Kallon finally succeeded with an accurate placement past the helpless Mohammedan custodian Ponir (5-1).

The lanky striker from Roger Milla's country then made it 4-1 in the 79th minute when he beat the Mohammedan goalie with a powerful header on cross floated by Batola from left (4-1).

After the fourth goal, the Indonesians apparently took things a little easily and Mohammedans cashed in on the attitudinal change of their opponents with substitute Ranjan finding the net in the 82nd minute.

In the remaining time, Mohammedans had two more chances to score. But the substitute goal-keeper of the Indonesian club pulled off fine saves to keep the score sheet unaltered.

The winners will take on Malaysia Red in tomorrow's final scheduled for a 3 pm start at the Dhaka Stadium.

The second half saw no respite in visitors' quest for consolidation as they added two



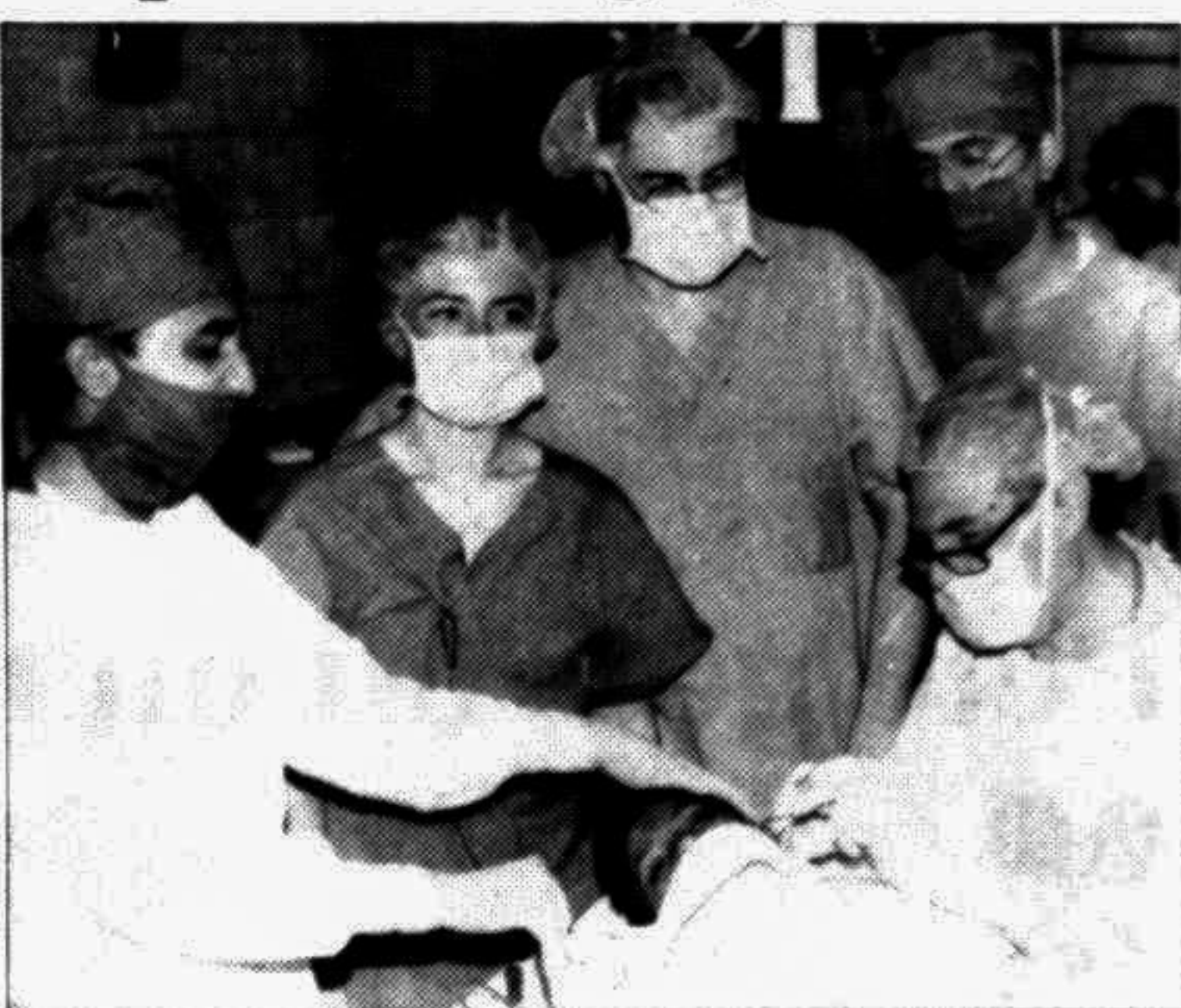
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**PHILIPS**

## Visiting Italian expert says Hospitals should introduce plastic surgery units



A group of Italian physicians conducting plastic surgery operation at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday.

By Masud Arif and Ripon Baig

Leader of the plastic reconstructive surgery team from Italy, Prof Paolo G. Morcelli has emphasised the need for introduction of units in hospitals in the country for treating patients specially with burn injuries.

"There is an enormous rush of patients needing plastic surgery in Bangladesh. The worst cases are patients with acid burns," he said in an interview with The Daily Star yesterday.

Prof Morcelli is leading a team of specialists in plastic surgery now visiting Bangladesh under a programme undertaken by Interplast Italy, a voluntary organisation of Italy, exclusively treating patients requiring plastic surgery specially in developing countries. He is specialised in plastic reconstructive surgery and is working as plastic surgeon at S. Orsola-Malpighi Hospital in Bologna, Italy.

The team is performing operations at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) on patients with various injuries and deformities mainly in lips,

palates and hands. They are treating patients mainly from the low income group, free of cost.

This is the fourth visit by such a team under the Interplast Italy.

Prof Morcelli's team of 10 Italians including hand surgeons, anesthesiologist and nurses performed successful operation, including one micro-surgery, on 89 patients at the DMCH till Tuesday. The team arrived Bangladesh in the last week of December.

Prof Morcelli also emphasised the need for training up young physicians so that they can treat similar patients in the country.

"Plastic surgery unit is not an isolated one," said Prof Morcelli adding, "co-ordination was necessary between this type of unit and other departments like ENT, Orthopedic and general surgery."

"Here in Bangladesh, doctors specially the young are much more enthusiastic about plastic surgery than many other countries," he said.

## Dental College student commits suicide

By DMC Correspondent

A second year student of the Dhaka Dental College reportedly committed suicide by jumping from the rooftop of the college hostel at Sobhanbagh early yesterday.

Aftabur Rahman Mukul, 22, who received fatal injuries while jumping from the roof at about 1 am yesterday, succumbed to his injuries at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) about 3 am, hospital sources said.

The body was sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

## RU teachers

From Page 1

The Assistant Registrar, Mahbubul Kabir was admitted to the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital with head injuries.

The Rajshahi University Officers' Association also gave the call for a tow-day strike beginning today protesting the clashes.

The ICS and the All-Party Students' Unity excluding Shibir also called a day-long strike tomorrow.

The trouble started when the newly-elected RUTA and Syndicate members, led by outgoing RUTA President Prof M Yousuf and Secretary Rafiqul Islam went to the Vice Chancellor's office at 9:30 am to ask the VC to stop the selection committee meeting terming it illegal.

## Myanmar

From Page 1

All the five on board jumped into the Bay after being hit by bullets as the intruders were reaching their boat amid indiscriminate fire, survivor Badiul Alam said.

The young fisherman, who suffered bullet wound in his left leg, reached the shore floating by a container and got admitted to Teknaf Thana Health Complex.

He named those still missing as Azizur Rahman, Abdur Rashid, Mohammad Yunus and Habibur Rahman, all hailing from Shahparir Dwp.

## Khaleda

From Page 1

told a group of reporters at the Minto Road official residence in her instant reaction to Ershad's getting bail in all the 17 corruption cases including one he was granted bail for yesterday.

"They (the ruling party) speak of containing corruption in the one hand and are releasing the corrupt people like Ershad on the other," Khaleda added.

## Writ : Indemnity

From Page 1

lenging the Indemnity (Repeal) Act, 1996.

Opening his argument in two separate writ petitions filed by Col (ret'd) Sharier Rashid and Mahmuda Rahman, mother of Col (ret'd) Faruk Rahman, in the division bench of the High Court comprising Justice Md Mozammel Haque and Justice Md Abdul Matin, the Attorney General said that the date on which the ordinance was made Khondaker Mush-taque Ahmed was neither a constitutional president nor a president under martial law.

"Since 15th August '75 till 4th April '79 the alleged date of withdrawal of the so-called martial law there was no martial law, but each of the successors only ratified the activities of their predecessors by making ordinances one after another," he submitted. "Thus all activities done or decisions taken have no legal basis."

He further submitted, "according to Article 93 of the Constitution no ordinance can take its retrospective effect, but the ordinance was made on September 26, 1975 giving it retrospective effect from August 15 which was inconsistent with the Constitution and, as such, the same is void and illegal under Article 7(2)."

"As the petitioners in their petitions denied their involvement in the August 15 killings they have no locus standi to file the petitions," he argued.

Yasmin murder

From Page 1

The number of accused persons in the case is nine.

Hearing of the case resumed today in a packed court room. A huge police force was deployed around the court building to maintain law and order as a big crowd thronged the area.

The witness were Hafizul Islam a tea shop owner, Abul Hasan Ahmed house master of Yasmin, Abdur Rahim a tea stall manager, Ahmed Ali Bhelo a chawkidar of Dinajpur sadar union and Nurul Huda a villager of Dasmile area where the crime was committed.

Earlier during hearing on November 25 and 26, eight witnesses had submitted their depositions in connection with the case.

Public prosecutor Gazi Rahman, aided by Special PP Azizur Rahman Mustazir and advocate Azizur Rahman represented the prosecution while advocates Majibar Rahman, Abdus Sattar and Abdul Haq Pramanik appeared for the defence.

Responding to demands of the local Awami League leaders, the Prime Minister said Ajit Guha College, which was burnt by the hoodlums of BNP, would be reconstructed.

Hasina said the government will provide all support for setting up a private EPZ in Comilla and agricultural college besides BARD. She said honours and degree level courses would be introduced in colleges and steps would be taken to solve the problems of Comilla Victoria College

## Civil authority

From Page 1

History, Dhaka University presented a paper on Civil Military Relations, Bangladesh Perspective. Editor of the Bhorer Kagoj Matur Rahman commented on the paper.

## Some city roads to be made rickshaw-free

By Staff Correspondent

Dhaka WASA will take all necessary steps to rid the city of water-logging by March next and other service organisations will immediately start cleaning up drains, ponds and other water-logged places to accelerate the on-going mosquito eradication drive in the city, says a press release of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

These were among several other decisions taken at the third meeting of the coordination committee or different service agencies in the city held yesterday. The meeting was held at the Nagar Bhavan with Mayor Mohammad Hanif in the chair.

The meeting also decided that some city roads would be made rickshaw-free and one-way to facilitate easy flow of traffic.

The meeting also decided to start the Premium Bus Service in the city from January 12.

The meeting was attended by among others Chairman, BRTA, Director General of the Directorate of Environment, Chairman, RAJUK and representatives of WASA, T&T Board, DESA, LGED ministry and other officials concerned.

## Death of party activist

Sylhet JCD begins fortnight-long programmes today

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Jan 8: The Sylhet district unit of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal has announced a fortnight long programmes to press its demand for immediate arrest of the 'killers' of its activist, Ruhul Amin. He succumbed to his injuries in the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital last Saturday.

The programme beginning tomorrow includes processions in all colleges, rallies at the thana headquarters and handing over a memorandum to