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Visiting British business delegation led by British Overseas Trade Board Chairman Sir Martin Laing called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her parliament office yesterday.

— PID photo

BOTB team assures PM

## Tariff concession under GSP to continue

The visiting team of the British Overseas Trade Board (BOTB) assured Bangladesh of continuing their tariff concession under the General System of Preference (GSP), reports UNB.

Speaking on opposition members' resolutions for disapproving the ordinances related to the extension of the time for holding local council elections in the three hill districts, Khan said: 'We want solution of the CHT problem through ballot and not through bullet.'

Khan, who looks after the special affairs division in Parliament, said the government was determined to hold local council elections in the hill districts at an appropriate time with the cooperation of the Jana Sanghati Samity and Shantibahini which will help resolve the nagging problems.

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The PCJSS team arrived at Dudukchhari on Thursday last to attend the peace talks held in the capital for the first time. The team members stayed at Dudukchhari and were flown by a military helicopter from there to Dhaka on Saturday morning.

## JS: Power import

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company to float shares in the stock market.

Besides, under the Rural Electrification Board (REB), 10 projects have been authorised to generate 10 MW power each at haor, shaoal and offshore areas in the country.

When a lawmaker asked why the country has to depend on funds from donors to generate power and why local resources cannot be mobilized, the Energy Minister said, DESA and PDB were overburdened with loans. PDB is not in a position now to generate more power with its own resources, said Khan adding that REB would float shares in the stock market soon to generate funds for development.

The Energy Minister told another questioner that a request has recently been made to the National Board of Review (NBR) to allow duty free import of generators.

He said that load shedding increased to 763 hours in 1995-96 from 113 hours in 1990-91. During the period from June 1, 1996 to January 20, the average

## Microcredit summit

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from the participation of the First Lady, she told this correspondent.

The organisers of the meeting are hopeful that the summit will generate wide global interest and re-energise the microcredit movement. Currently, over 2.5 billion people are considered extremely poor, living on one dollar or less a day. The organisers hope that by the year 2005, over 100 million poor people would have access to small loans, giving them a real opportunity to crawl out of abject poverty. If this is to happen, the microcredit groups will need a total of 21.6 billion dollar over the next eight years.

The organisers believe that the bulk of the money, about 8 billion dollar could be raised commercially. About 7 billion dollar would come from aid-giving countries and various multinational corporations would chip in some 2.5 billion dollar. Another 1.6 billion dollar would come from the developing countries themselves. The remaining 2 billion dollar would come in the form of new deposits from creditors.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP),

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## The Daily Star

## BAC decisions not followed, alleges BNP, denies AL

By Staff Correspondent

Some senior members of the Treasury and Opposition benches had an unscheduled debate in the House yesterday on whether or not the Jatiya Sangsads session was being run as per decisions of the Business Advisory Committee (BAC).

The BAC, comprising leading members of all the parties in parliament, meets time to time to decide issues relating to the running of every session.

The brief debate was triggered by Chief Whip of the Opposition Khandakar Delwar Hossain who blamed the ruling party for not going by the BAC decisions. The Opposition leader rose after several members of his party demanded allowing more questions on the government plan to import power from India.

He also criticised the lengthy and irrelevant deliberations by the ministers while replying to questions and noted and termed such practices as inconsistent with what was decided at the BAC meeting. Earlier, some Treasury Bench members also protested 'issuance of statements' by their Opposition colleagues in the name of formulating questions and raising points of order.

It may be mentioned that the BAC members belonging to the main opposition BNP boycotted the committee meetings during the last session and they started participating in its activities following the recent Government-Opposition agreement on issues relating to the affairs of the parliament.

State Minister for Planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir answered questions relating to Prime Minister's office and Cabinet Division in the House on Thursday and Sunday.

Two BNP lawmakers, M K Anwar and Ziaur Rahman Khan, filed petitions on Monday seeking revision of his ruling on Sunday.

When the petitioners raised the issue yesterday, for the third consecutive day, Abdul Hamid assured that after reviewing their petitions he would soon let the House know about his decision on the matter.

Deputy Leader of the House and LGRD Minister Zillur Rahman rose to contradict the Opposition leader. 'The BAC did not limit time for the ministers... because time cannot always be limited for the ministers.'

Khandakar Delwar took the floor again to challenge the same is repeated again.'

## Raphael: Cooperation

From Page 1

affairs.

Raphael said that she is happy that Bangladesh was now having a more stable and matured democracy after having overcome the political stalemate of the past through the efforts of the political parties.

She mentioned that she had fruitful meetings with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia.

She observed that the Opposition had expressed some doubts to her about implementation of the four-point accord recently signed for their return to Parliament. But she hoped that everything will progress smoothly.

Raphael observed that Bangladesh is attracting foreign investment and there was now greater interest and investment by US companies.

She said South Asia was strategically important for the United States as it borders China and South East Asia besides being the home of nearly one-fifth of the world's population.

"Our main concern is the instability in Afghanistan and I hope that peace and stability will return there, which had eluded it for 18 years."

Besides, South Asia, "is important to us in terms of trade and investment," Raphael added.

The new US Secretary of State, Madeline Albright, considers South Asia as an important area that deserves US attention, she said.

Albright was serving earlier as the US Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

Replied to a question, she said President Bill Clinton will bring several changes in the State Department during his second term in office as part of a routine exercise. 'I do not

## British team

From Page 1

missions,' he said.

Peter Lee, a member of Martin's team who had led another British trade team in Bangladesh in 1995 said though the pace of real investment is still very slow now, it would go up in the near future.

"At least six small joint venture projects are going to bring about 200 million dollars more investment in the country," he added.

British High Commissioner in Bangladesh David C Walker and other member of the delegation were also present at the press conference.

The British team left Dhaka for home last night.

## Loan Court Act

From Page 1

neither realise the huge amount of loans taken by the big shots, nor stop them from taking fresh loans. The increase of power of the loan courts suggested in the proposed amendment is already there in the original law," Razzak Ali noted.

The former Speaker suggested that there should be a new law which would empower the authorities to take over the property of the defaulters.

The Finance Minister agreed with Shaikh Razzak Ali and said the government would need to do so in the future.

Mashirul Rahman of the BNP told the House that although the idea of strengthening the Financial Loan Courts was good, practically the big loan defaulters always went unpunished. "The big defaulters rather move around the world with the Prime Minister, while the government issues certificate cases against the poor farmers," Mashirul Rahman said.

Another BNP legislator, Shahidul Islam, who opposed the approval of the presidential ordinance, said the loan courts had so far failed to punish the big defaulters.

Referring to the recent scandal regarding the IFIC Bank, the BNP lawmaker said a section of the people took huge amount of loans to their own banks, and then drew loans from their private banks. "But none of them has been punished by the court, while it has punished the poor farmers," Prof Shahidul Islam said.

Acknowledging the contention of the BNP MPs, the finance minister said non-payment of loan is a long-standing problem of the country. The minister, however, reminded them of the fact that the situation had aggravated during the past BNP government.

## Indemnity (Repeal) Act

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In September last year, a six-member committee was formed by the government to examine the Indemnity Ordinance of 1975 and prepare a bill for its repeal.

The committee headed by Aminullah, secretary, Ministry of Law and Justice, also included Mustafizur Rahman, Abul Bashar Bhuiyan, joint secretaries, Ministry of Law and Justice, Md. Ahsanul Ahsan, secretary, Law and Justice, Md. Iqbal Ahmed, Legal Administration, Institute and Anwarul Haq, deputy secretary of the law ministry.

The committee submitted the bill to the ministry of law which was later placed before parliament, the Jatiya Sangsads passed the Indemnity (Repeal) bill, 1996 on November 12 last year by a simple majority.

UNB adds: Earlier the High Court had issued rule on the writ petition on December 2 directing the government as to why the Indemnity (Repeal) Act '96 should not be declared illegal and ultra vires of the Constitution.

The court had appointed six noted constitutional experts as amicus curiae — Barrister Syed Iftaque Ahmed, Dr Kamal Hos

Deputy Leader of the House and demanded that the proceedings of the last BAC meeting be placed in the House. "It was decided that time will be allocated to the questioners and the respondent in accordance with the importance of the issues," he added.

The BNP leader also protested issuance of statements by the Energy Minister yesterday and by the State Minister for Religious Affairs the day before.

The brief debate was triggered by Chief Whip of the Opposition Khandakar Delwar Hossain who blamed the ruling party for not going by the BAC decisions. The Opposition leader rose after several members of his party demanded allowing more questions on the government plan to import power from India.

He also criticised the lengthy and irrelevant deliberations by the ministers while replying to questions and noted and termed such practices as inconsistent with what was decided at the BAC meeting. Earlier, some Treasury Bench members also protested 'issuance of statements' by their Opposition colleagues in the name of formulating questions and raising points of order.

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Raphael hoped that efforts would be made to ensure free and fair polls in Pakistan and mentioned that different monitoring groups including that from SAARC countries would be present.

She was happy to note that all the major parties are now working again in parliament and hoped that they will make efforts to strengthen the democratic institutions.

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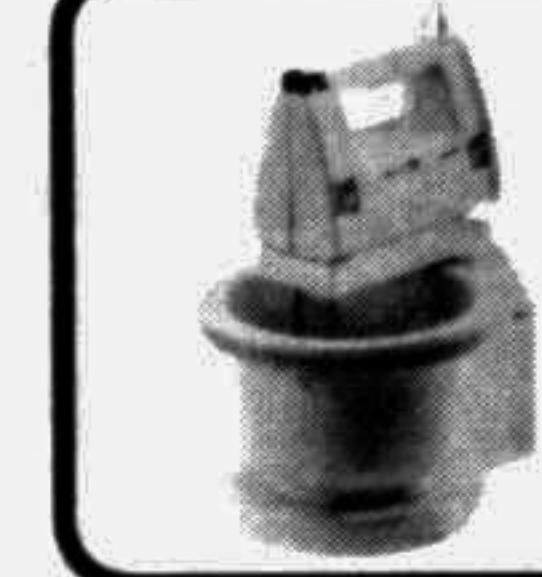
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PHILIPS

## Sangsad snippets

districts is much more than that of your area," he told the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker told the member, who is a lawyer. "You're supposed to feel more cold since you wear coat even in the summer."

During a heated debate on the government plan to import power from India, ruling party MP Tajul Islam said, "We find problems with power everywhere... even discussion on power is generating much heat in the House."

The House plunged into laughter when Islam wanted to know from the Chair if the heat in the House could produce power.

Speaking on the Arto Rin Adalat (amendment) Bill, BNP lawmaker Moshirul Rahman said, "We inherited as many as 90 files, left by the former Prime Minister (Begum Khaleda Zia) at the PM's Secretariat. It may be, those files could not move due to lack of fuel."

Rafiq passed the HSC examination from the Tejgaon College. He later became involved in his brother's garment's business as a director, police said quoting his family members.

The cause of the killing could not be known immediately. However, police say, the murder might be the result of a conflict among the friends.

Rafiq's elder brother, Ismail Hossain, a businessman, in the FIR filed with police has accused eight persons of the murder. He said, one Rafiq called his brother from their house saying they would go to a friend's residence for iftar.

Cantonment police arrested one Manik, reportedly a friend of Rafiq, from the New DOHS area yesterday, in connection with the murder. They also interrogated the driver, Mokbul.