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Delhi hikes defence budget by 21pc

NEW DELHI, Feb 28: India today hiked its military spending by 21 per cent to 10.2 billion US dollars in its federal budget for fiscal year to March, 1998, reports AFP.

The hefty increase of 1.8 billion dollars over the previous year's allocation stood around 17 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

Finance Minister P. Chidambaram in his annual federal budget also promised to grant more funds to the defence sector if necessary.

On the capital account I am providing 2.54 billion dollars with a clear promise that any additional requirement of defence for capital expenditure will be adequately provided.

"In the past, revenue expenditure of the defence services had been routinely underprovided. This year, I have requested the Ministry of Defence to fully provide for the revenue expenditure."

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Delhi to extend Rs 30 cr credit facility to Dhaka

NEW DELHI, Feb 28: India will extend credit facility of rupees 30 crore to Bangladesh in the proposed budget for the fiscal 1997-98 beginning April one, reports BSS.

Presenting the union budget for 1997-98 to parliament Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said Bhutan would get credit facility of Rupees 60 crore during the fiscal besides a grant of rupees 105 crore.

The Maldives will get rupees 18 crore while Myanmar and Sri Lanka will receive rupees 20 crore and rupees 5.5 crore respectively, the minister said.

PM asks tax officials to achieve target

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the tax officials to rise above petty interests and discharge their duties with utmost sincerity to make the government's economic programmes a success, reports UNB.

"Your honesty, sincerity and efficiency will help us achieve success in our struggle for economic emancipation," she said addressing the Annual General Meeting of BCS Taxation Association at a local hotel in the evening.

Success and failure of government's economic development programmes depends on the role of tax officials in mobilising resources, Hasina said.

"You are the main force of the government to collect internal resources for economic progress," she said.

In the current fiscal year, she said, the target of economic growth has been fixed at six per cent and that of revenue growth at 12 per cent. She said tax officials attained the target of revenue collection in the first six months and hoped that they

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Storm lashes 3 thanas in Pabna

PABNA, Feb 28: A storm swept over three thanas of the district early today, damaging some 200 kutch houses and outstanding rabi crops, reports UNB.

Officials said the storm with a speed of about 70 kilometres lashed some 25 villages in Sadar, Sathia and Bera thanas at about 4.30 am.

About 200 dwelling houses, hundreds of trees and electric poles were uprooted by the storm which continued for about half-an-hour.

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Villagers attack camp Ansars open fire in Savar: 4 killed

By Staff Correspondent

Four persons were killed and at least 15 people including seven Ansars injured when Ansars opened fire during a clash with villagers at Sadapur in Savar near the city yesterday morning.

The dead were identified as Rupash Begum, a housewife, and farmers Sayeed Mollah, Mojib Mollah and Sayeed Alam, Savar police said.

Two of the injured, Zahuruddin, 40, and Iqbal Hossain, 35, were under treatment at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), hospital sources said.

The other injured were taken to different hospitals and clinics at Savar and Manikganj.

Details about the dead and the injured people, aged between 30 and 45, could not be known.

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Pakistan SAARC cricket champions



Pakistan A captain Asif Mujtaba receives the trophy of the third SAARC cricket tournament from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina during the award-giving ceremony at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday.

— Star photo

Confcof former UZ chairmen belonging to JP today

Star Report

A conference of former chairmen of now-defunct upazila, belonging to Jatiya Party and those given nomination for the last general elections is scheduled to be held today at the premises of the Asiatic Printers at Tejgaon in the city.

The conference is going to be held as a 'mobilisation campaign' of the party ranks and file following the release of JP leader and former President HM Ershad, said a party source.

Meanwhile, a two-day meeting of the extended committee of JP concluded Thursday night at the premises of Asiatic Printers with an emotional speech delivered by the party chief, said the source adding that the high hopes to build the party at the grassroots level generated enthusiasm among the ranks and file.

Ershad was flanked by his wife Roushan, an MP, on one side and Zinat, another party MP and presidium member on the other side for some time during the concluding day of the extended committee's meeting, to sources said.

The meeting decided to ac-

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JEC meets in Dhaka soon: Brujerdi

By M Anwarul Haq

Bangladesh-Iran Joint Economic Commission (JEC) will meet in Dhaka shortly to explore further areas of sustainable cooperation between the two countries.

In an interview with The Daily Star on Thursday in Dhaka, Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran Alauddin Brujerdi said that Dhaka-Tehran ties would be bolstered further after the JEC meeting, which would be preceded by a high level Iranian delegation's visit to Dhaka. An Iranian Trade Show will also be organised in the Bangladesh capital shortly, the minister said. The Charge d'Affaires of the Iranian Embassy Mohammad Abbaszadeh was present during the interview.

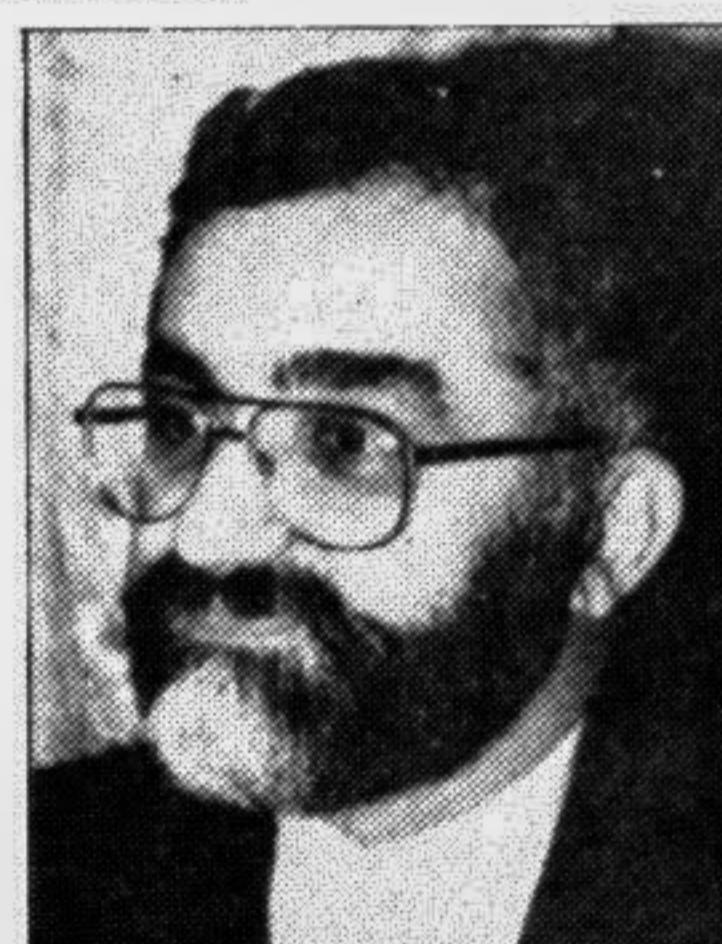
The Iranian Minister spoke elaborately about transit facilities, trade relations, the OIC, trans-Asian gas pipeline project and a number of other issues.

Alauddin Brujerdi said that both Bangladesh and Iran were "investment absorbing countries" and that direct air links between Dhaka and Tehran were likely to be opened after the ensuing Hajj.

He said more Iranian cul-

ture centres could be opened in

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Alauddin Brujerdi

Bangladesh on the basis of agreement.

He noted that Dhaka was ahead of Delhi in signing a tri-lateral Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Iran, Turkmenistan and Bangladesh for using transit facilities of Iran's Bandar Abbas port and railway facilities for sending Bangladeshi goods

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Tripura assures Dhaka team to help repatriate Chakma refugees

An 11-member Bangladesh delegation is now visiting the Indian state of Tripura in the government's bid to bring back the Bangladeshi tribal refugees to their homeland, reports UNB.

Chief Whip Abul Hasnat Abdulla, who is chairman of the national committee on Chittagong Hill Tracts, is leading the delegation comprising committee members and government officials.

At one stage of the hour-long clash, the Ansars opened fire. Police from Savar then rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Four of the injured villagers died after they were taken to a local hospital. Their bodies were sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsy, police said.

Meanwhile, police closed the Ansar camp following the incident while the injured Ansars including platoon commander were taken to local hospital.

Neither the senior Ansar officials nor anyone from the Partex Group could be con-

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