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**BB asks banks to discourage import of luxury, consumer goods**

Bangladesh Bank has asked the commercial banks to demand high margin while opening letters of credit for luxury and consumer goods in order to discourage their imports.

A senior official of the central bank told UNB yesterday that the restrictive measure was also aimed at maintaining the foreign exchange reserve level which is not in a very comfortable position. He said the banks were requested to discourage imports of consumer products which are not essential and the luxury goods like perfume and toiletries which have flooded the local markets recently.

Imports of children's food items like chocolate have also marked a substantial rise in recent months, fast eroding the See Page 12 Col 5

**JS committees to be formed soon, Speaker tells President**

President Shahabuddin Ahmed yesterday discussed with the Speaker the delay in forming various parliamentary committees as alleged by the BNP, reports UNB. Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury who called on the President at Bangabhaban told him that the formation of different parliamentary committees would be completed as soon as possible. A three-member BNP delegation met President Shahabuddin Ahmed on March 25 and pointed out the delay in forming the parliamentary committees.

It requested the President to use his good office to facilitate early formation of the committees keeping in view due representation of BNP parliamentarians. The Speaker gave the Presi- See Page 12 Col 7

**Govt firm to do justice to people's verdict, says Hasina**

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her government would do something significant for welfare of the nation and take it forward in line with people's mandate, reports UNB. She said the people had reposed their confidence in the Awami League after long 21 years, and her party and government were determined to do justice to people's verdict.

Welcoming a five-member delegation of the Communist Party of China led by Ma Qizhi, member of the CPC central committee and Deputy Secretary of CPC of Ningxia Hui autonomous region, Sheikh Hasina said: "We are optimistic about people's confidence in us and we shall be able to make this country hunger and poverty-free." See Page 12 Col 2

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## Ctg port proposed gateway to S Asian sub-region

By M Anwarul Haq

The prospect of making Chittagong Port the major gateway to the South Asian sub-region by upgrading it for catering also to the needs of India's seven north-eastern states, landlocked Nepal and Bhutan is likely to figure prominently at a high-level meeting in Kathmandu today, diplomatic sources indicated.

The foreign secretary level meeting of the four countries is also expected to focus on upgradation of Mongla Port and handling of the vast Himalayan water sources for the common benefit of the sub-region.

The day-long meeting is likely to formalise the concept of sub-regional cooperation among the four geographically contiguous countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal. The meeting is also expected to spell out the proposed areas of cooperation and appoint national and international consultants to carry out feasibility studies. It is also likely to identify broad areas of sub-regional cooperation in areas such as surface communication, water, energy and infrastructure for common benefit.

Nepal is expected to present an approach paper at the conference on the proposed sub-regional cooperation while Bangladesh, India and Bhutan are likely to present short concept papers and carry out extensive deliberations on the paper prepared by Nepal. A 'special meeting' of the

foreign ministers of the four countries involved in the proposed sub-regional grouping is due to be held on April 6 in New Delhi on the sidelines of the 12th Foreign Ministers meeting of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) being held in the Indian capital from April 4 to 8, to formally endorse the concept.

Acting Foreign Secretary of Nepal Kumar Prasad Gyawali, who is the coordinator of the today's Kathmandu meeting, will preside over today's meeting, which is likely to be inaugurated by Nepalese Foreign Minister Prakash Chandra Lohani.

Leading multilateral donor agencies like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have expressed their interest in funding projects in the sub-region after completion of feasibility studies. The ADB has already prepared a concept paper centering the 'Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna' (GBM) ecological region, and has shown its interest to fund the first phase of feasibility study.

The ADB's Director for Programmes based in Manila is due to attend the Kathmandu meet today to present a concept paper. The World Bank is going ahead with feasibility studies on probable projects of sub-regional nature through a study called 'Dynamic Triangle', headed by leading Harvard University academic Prof Peter Rogers.

Today's meeting will explore the possibility of taking steps See Page 12 Col 1

**Kathmandu meet opens today**

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**Constitution amended**

### Pak President can't sack govt, appoint Armed Forces chiefs

ISLAMABAD, Apr 1: The Pakistan parliament passed a constitution amendment bill today to curb presidential powers to sack a government and appoint armed forces chiefs and provincial governors, report agencies. The 217-member National Assembly (lower house) adopted the bill 190-0 shortly after the 87-seat Senate (upper house) passed it 79-0 votes.

The passage of the bill, announced by National Assembly Speaker Ishaq Khan, came hours after Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's cabinet decided to move the amendment to restore supremacy of parliament.

The amendments make dissolving the National Assembly and sacking of a prime minister, the appointment of armed forces chiefs and provincial governors by the president subject to approval from the prime minister.

One amendment also bars provincial governors from dissolving provincial assemblies without approval from their respective chief ministers.

The amendment was introduced in the Senate after the cabinet last night decided to delete parts of the controversial Eighth Amendment of the Constitution. The move came after Nawaz Sharif, in a televised address to the nation, announced that his party and allies had decided to clip presidential powers and restore parliamentary supremacy by deleting parts of the infamy See Page 12 Col 7

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**BNP to take up region-based street programme**

BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday asked the government to stop terrorism, killing and conspiracy to sell out the country or the people would not allow it to stay in power any more, reports UNB. She said her party would announce region-based appropriate street programme to match with government steps.

"From now on, our programme will be of different type... we'll announce street protest in that region or area where the government will create a situation," said the Leader of the Opposition.

"Wherever there will be government's injustice and repression there will be resistance," she said. The former Premier said her party's new style of movement is to relieve countrymen from suffering. "Our movement is not See Page 12 Col 3

**Fresh BNP programme Countrywide agitation on April 6 & 12**

The opposition BNP will stage demonstrations on April 6 and 12 across the country to protest what it said arrests and harassments of its leaders and workers under the repressive mechanism of the government. Party Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan announced the programme at a press conference at the official residence of the Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday.

"If the government fails to take action against those responsible for the killings in Feni within seven days as demanded by BNP chief Begum Zia, tougher programme will be announced for that region," Bhuiyan said. Asked about the Prime Minister's offer for a discussion with the BNP chief and live television programme to answer all questions, he said, "We did not receive any formal invitation for the discussion," and added, "People should be allowed to give their verdict following the proposed television programme."

He stressed that the government must take initiative to create a congenial atmosphere for discussion by releasing leaders and workers of BNP implicated in 'false cases' and withdrawing such other measures See Page 12 Col 8

**Commentary Is the PM serious about talks?**

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has offered to sit for a dialogue with the Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia on any national issue, anywhere at any time. This could be even live on television, in the presence of journalists who could pose any question as they would like.

As journalists we naturally love the idea of getting our two supreme leaders live on TV and having a chance to ask all those questions whose answers we have been clamouring for. But as a format for solving national problems, or as an attempt to bring our two most important political parties closer together and getting some sort of working cooperation going, live debate on TV is not a good idea at all. In fact it is a bad idea, full of disastrous possibilities.

Given the history of personal relations between the present and the former heads of our government, a live TV encounter is more likely to turn out to be more confrontational than constructive. Therefore our suggestion is that if the Prime Minister is sincere about a genuine dialogue then it should be held, as any serious discussion between matured politicians are held all over the world, first in private and then in public. At the very outset representatives of the two leaders should meet and set out the parameters of the discussion. These representatives will have to go back and forth several times before being able to concretise the agenda.

Once the agenda is agreed upon, then senior leaders from both sides could hold discussions to get a feeling of where each side is in relation to the other on the various issues that divide them. Obviously there will be posturing at first, and then there will be more realistic and factual statement of positions. It is then when the real discussion will start, and the possibility of understanding, if any, will open up at that stage. Obviously the two leaders will be fully in the picture as leaders of both sides will be reporting to them about every detail of the discussion being held.

It may be asked that if the PM is serious about discussing national problems with the Leader of the Opposition, then why does she not use the Parliament, and have the debate telecast? Answer to that we already know. Parliamentary debates have degenerated into name calling and finger pointing exercise. So our preference is for face to face private talks. Through this process the real stumbling blocks in mutual cooperation will become identified, and whose solution can only come from negotiations at the summit level. On the surface the above process may appear to be too involved and time-consuming. Negotia- See Page 12 Col 4

**Commentary BNP creating chaos to save killers: AL**

Ruling party leaders yesterday said BNP is out to create a law-and-order situation in an ulterior motive to save the killers of Bangabandhu who are now on trial, reports UNB.

Not for another logical reason, Begum Khaleda Zia has come out to street so that the trial for Bangabandhu killing could not be held, they told a rally in the city. They said the BNP befriended defeated forces of 1971 and killers of 1975 in their bid to create an anarchic situation and warned that the nation would give reply to their 'anti-people' activities.

Awami Jubo League, the youth front of the ruling party, organised the rally in front of Awami League office to protest the killing of Galib, Kamrul and Salam and 'terrorist and subversive' acts of BNP. AL leaders Amir Hossain Anu, Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak, Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed, Post and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim and Mofaz- See Page 12 Col 7

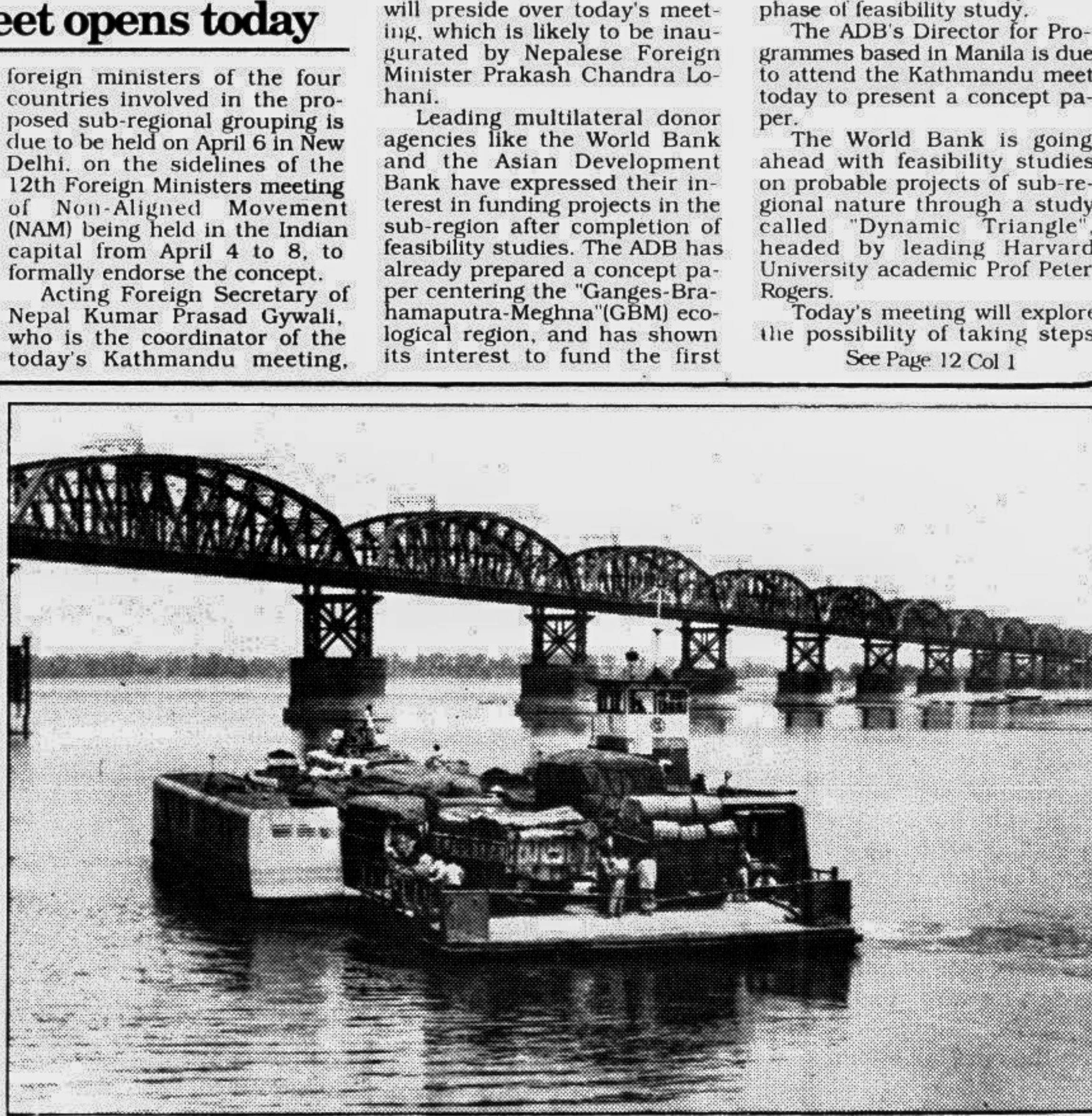
**Water level in Padma falls**

RAJSHAHI, Apr 1: The water level in the Padma is falling, drying up its tributaries, affecting thousands of people who depend on it for irrigation, fishery and industrial purposes, according to reports received here from different parts of this region.

A bone-dry weather since the last monsoon has worsened the situation. An acute shortage of water is prevailing along the banks of the Padma, hampering irrigation when IRR1-Boro paddy need water most during this time of the year.

A large number of hand-pumps in different areas of Rajshahi, Chapai Nawabganj, Pabna, Kushtia, Goalundo and Rajbari have become inoperative. Even the operation of shallow and deep tubewells have become threatened as the ground water level is declining. Officials said Indian Minister for Water Resources James- See Page 12 Col 4

## Water level in Padma falls



A ferry negotiates the pool like Padma at Harding Bridge point, making its journey to the other side. The photograph was taken on March 27, when the water flow was at its lowest in recent times.

**JRC meet uncertain**

A crucial three-day meeting of Bangladesh-India Joint Rivers Commission (JRC), scheduled to be held in Dhaka on April 10, to follow up the Ganges water accord has become uncertain in the wake of political seesaw in the Indian capital.

Officials said Indian Minister for Water Resources James- See Page 12 Col 4

**SC bar election Nazmul Huda president, Zainul Abedin secretary**

By SC Correspondent Nazmul Huda and Zainul Abedin have been elected president and secretary respectively of the Supreme Court Bar Association for the year 1997-98.

Nazmul Huda, a BNP MP, See Page 12 Col 7

**ICC TROPHY Bangladesh beat HK, take on Ireland today**



MALAYSIA 1997

Bangladesh maintained their impressive run in the ICC Trophy with a comprehensive seven-wicket victory against Hong Kong in Kuala Lumpur, reports UNB.

Put into bat, Hong Kong were all out for 145 in 45.2 overs. In reply, Bangladesh scored 148 for three in 38.2 overs. Vice-captain Aminul Islam Bulbul with 53 not out guided the team to victory. He was later declared man-of-the-match. In the second match of Group F, Bangladesh will meet Ireland today. (Details on page 10)

**Zobaida's bail SC turns down govt appeal petition, vacates stay on HC order**

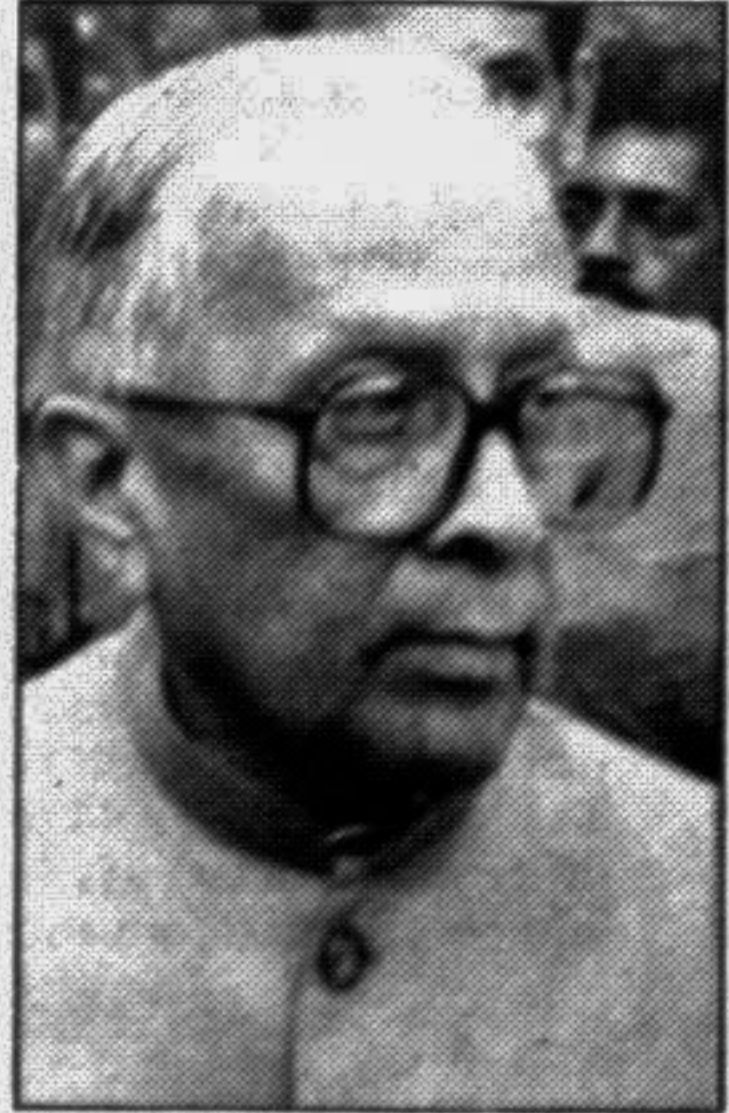
By SC Correspondent The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday refused the government petition for leave to appeal against the High Court verdict granting bail to Zobaida Rashid, an accused in the Bangabandhu murder case. The full bench of the Appellate Division also vacated the order of stay of the HC judgement.

The division bench of the HC comprising Justice Mahmudul See Page 12 Col 1

**Ex-Speaker Razzak Ali granted anticipatory bail**

By SC Correspondent Former speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali MP was granted anticipatory bail by the High Court yesterday in a corruption case. A division bench of the HC comprising Justice Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury and Justice Shah Abu Naim Mominor Rahman also issued a rule on the government to show cause See Page 12 Col 3

## Politicians now seeking advice from Basu, Sonia



Jyoti Basu

NEW DELHI, Apr 1: A veteran Communist and Rajiv Gandhi's Italian-born widow are being courted by Indian political leaders as they battle against time to save the country's 10-month-old coalition government, AFP quoting newspapers said today. Leading politicians are seeking advice from Jyoti Basu, India's best-known Communist, and Sonia, widow of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, on ways of ending the political deadlock, the dailies said.

Basu was first choice of the ruling United Front coalition for the prime ministership in 1996 but he refused, paying the way for H D Deve Gowda. Newspapers said top leaders of the Congress (I) party had spoken to Basu at length over the telephone. "A list of those in touch with Basu would read like a who's

**Hectic parleys to defuse crisis**

who of Indian politics," a communist leader said. "Everybody wants to know his views." Basu, who will attend a CPI-M meeting here Wednesday, told The Hindu daily in Calcutta: "The Congress has pushed the country into uncertainties. It is very difficult to say how things will shape in the coming days."

On Monday, Congress leaders made a beeline to Sonia's heavily-guarded residence, known popularly by its address of '10 Janpath', to keep her informed about various political developments. The callers included Congress chief Sitaram Keshri. Sonia was urged by the Congress to take over the party leadership after the assassina- See Page 12 Col 8

**Hectic parleys to defuse crisis**

tion of her husband in 1991, but she refused. BSS adds: As president Shankar Dayal Sharma extended the time frame for the UF government to prove majority in parliament by April 11, hectic parleys have started among the major political parties to defuse the current political crisis.

The Secretary General of All India Congress Committee (AICC), Ms Meira Kumar today confirmed the beginning of dialogue between her party and the UF but declined to say at what level such talks were going. Former prime minister V P Singh, now undergoing treatment at a hospital, has initiated the negotiations between the Congress and the United Front. Another former prime minister Chandrashekhar has been See Page 12 Col 8



Sonia Gandhi

**MONNO**

**মুন্সি সিরামিক ইন্ডাস্ট্রিজ লিমিটেড**  
 ৯, ওয়ারার স্ট্রিট, ওয়ারী, ঢাকা-১২০০

**মুন্সি সিরামিক ইন্ডাস্ট্রিজ লিমিটেডের শেয়ার বিনিয়োগকারী এবং শেয়ার হোল্ডারদের প্রতি সতর্কীকরণ বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

সম্প্রতি কর্তৃপক্ষ লক্ষ্য করেছেন যে, কতিপয় অসামু্য ব্যক্তি/ব্যক্তিবর্গ মুন্সি সিরামিক ইন্ডাস্ট্রিজ লিমিটেডের শেয়ার সার্টিফিকেট জাল করে নকল শেয়ার, বাজারে বিক্রির তৎপরতা চালাচ্ছে। এ উদ্দেশ্যে সম্মানিত বিনিয়োগকারী/শেয়ার হোল্ডার/শেয়ার ক্রেয় ইচ্ছুক ব্যক্তি বা প্রতিষ্ঠানকে অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে যে, তাঁরা যেন শেয়ার ক্রেয়ের পূর্বে শেয়ার সার্টিফিকেট ও আনুসঙ্গিক কাগজ-পত্র অবশ্যই পুঙ্খানুপুঙ্খরূপে পরীক্ষা করে নেন এবং UN-IDENTIFIED ব্যক্তি বা ব্যক্তিবর্গের নিকট থেকে শেয়ার ক্রেয় বিরত থাকেন।

নকল শেয়ার সার্টিফিকেটের জন্য কোম্পানী কোনরূপ দায়-দায়িত্ব গ্রহণ করবে না।

- কর্তৃপক্ষ