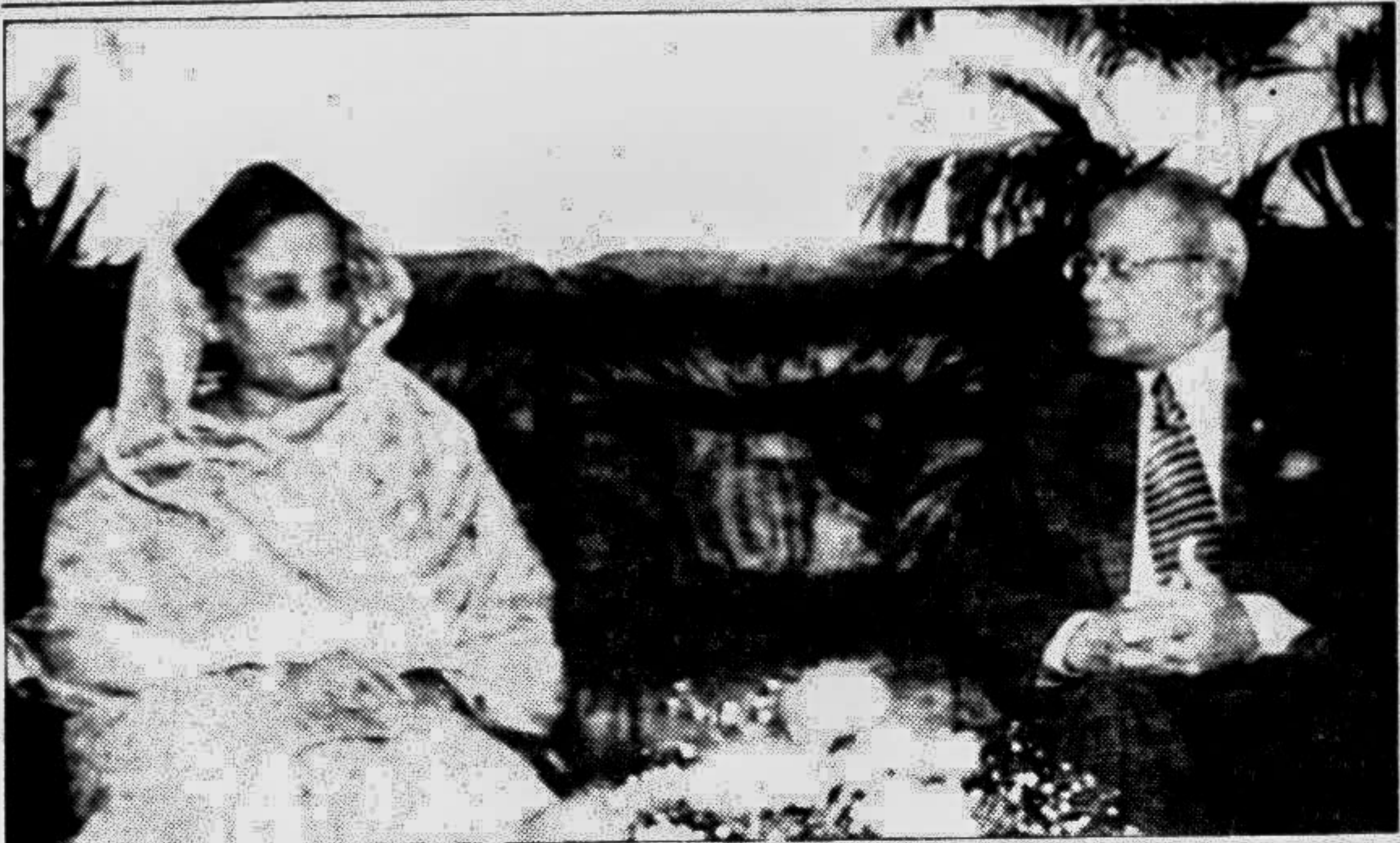


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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and President Maumun Abdul Gayoom of The Maldives at the VVIP lounge of Male International Airport after her arrival in Male yesterday. — PID photo

## SAARC summit

From Page 1

SAARC member countries have agreed to reduce tariffs on more than 1,700 items, but some 4,500 remain untouched, and commerce between the seven SAARC countries accounts for only three per cent of their total trade.

The region trades far more with the 15-member states of the European Union, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the North American Free Trade Agreement than between themselves.

The modest level of trade between India and Pakistan is a telling example of the gap between aspirations and reality.

Two-way trade between the neighbours totalled 115 million dollars in the year to March 1996, India traded more than three times as much with Sri Lanka and nine times more with Bangladesh.

India will press its partners to consider modelling SAARC on the European Union and adopting a single currency.

The European Union concept might sound a bit far-fetched now, but by the turn of the century it would be the crying need among SAARC nations. Indian foreign secretary Salman Haider said last week.

"The goal is the free flow of trade, capital, people and even to start a SAARC currency," Sharma said.

SAARC leaders are also expected to endorse an agreement reached by their foreign ministers at the weekend to relax visa requirements for 10 categories of travellers, including SAARC ministers and the heads of international sports organisations.

Meanwhile, the foreign ministers ended a two-day meeting here today agreeing to review the progress of their grouping.

Maldives foreign minister Fathullah Jameel said they agreed to appoint a group of experts to assess the work of the SAARC, initiated in 1985.

Jameel defended the performance of SAARC saying 12 years was too short a period to see results and said similar groupings had taken longer to become effective.

"We are now getting into action-oriented activities," Jameel said adding SAARC will have two groups working on environmental issues such as global warming and natural disasters caused by climate change.

Jameel admitted that 'many factors' may have contributed to the group's slow progress.

Ministers agreed to speed up a delayed regional trade pact and work towards a South Asia free trade area between 2000 and 2005.

Jameel said SAARC members also agreed to increase the categories of people who could travel within the region without visas.

## Hasina, Gujral for close cooperation

MALE, May 11: Indian Prime Minister I K Gujral called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Kurumba village resort here this evening and discussed matters of mutual interest, reports BSS.

The two leaders now in the Maldivian capital to attend the ninth SAARC summit, resolved to work with close cooperation for the development of the two countries and peoples.

Later, talking to a group of newsmen, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said Bangladesh would work with other SAARC nations for peace and prosperity of the region.

## ADB report

From Page 1

creasing share of the population is of working age, economic growth per person tends to be the highest and the national savings rate tends to rise," ADB said.

"Looking ahead, South Asia will have a rising share of workers in the next 30 years. Although this does not guarantee higher growth, it does provide a potential boost. The challenge is to create sufficient jobs for the large numbers of labour force entrants.

"By contrast, the rising proportion of retirees in the total population will likely dampen East Asian growth and savings rates," the bank added.

Asia's population is currently estimated at three billion, or about 53 per cent of the world population.

## CHT peace talks

From Page 1

ban. One BDR JCO and two Shantibahinimen were killed and another securityman was injured in the gunfight.

Repeatedly pressed by newsmen, Abdullah gave only a few replies. He said, "There has been no change in the issues being discussed. Only a couple of new demands by them has been

## Dipankar tells JS CHT problem very close to a solution

The government and tribal leaders are now very close to a solution of the staggering problem in Chittagong Hill Tracts, reports UNB.

This was stated by a ruling party MP from Rangamati, Dipankar Talukdar, in parliament yesterday.

He made the observation while the government and the leaders of tribal insurgents resumed dialogue in the capital yesterday.

Dipankar, who is involved in the peace process, however, deplored that a certain political party was trying to foil the peace move in the CHT through various activities.

On a point of order, he said the present peace talks between the government and the tribal leaders started under the Ershad government on the basis of 5-point demand placed by the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity.

Dipankar said misleading statements would only confuse the peace process in the CHT and sought cooperation from all in resolving the problems.

## Khaleda tells US envoy BNP firmly committed to democracy

Outgoing US Ambassador David N Merrill called on BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition Begum Khaleda Zia at her cantonment residence yesterday, reports UNB.

Merrill was accompanied by his wife Nancy Powell and the meeting was held in a very friendly and cordial atmosphere, said a BNP press release.

During the meeting, Merrill said the US and Bangladesh are working together in the interest of peace and development and hoped that friendship between the two countries would be strengthened further in the days ahead.

Referring to Bangladesh's support during the BNP government to the US in dealing with different international issues like Haiti, Merrill praised Begum Zia's political wisdom and prudence.

President Clinton also appreciated Begum Zia's role, the outgoing US Ambassador said.

He recalled that friendship between the two countries improved much following the visit to Bangladesh of First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and of some other US officials.

The BNP chairperson said her party is firmly committed to democracy. It is the BNP which had restored multi-party democracy in the country, she said.

"We are trying our best to give democracy an institutional shape... We are ready to extend our cooperation in all areas to protect national interest and people's rights," she said.

About regional cooperation, Begum Zia said Shaheed Rashed

## Slum dwellers in Mohammadpur allege forced removal

By Staff Correspondent

The dwellers of Bijlmahal slum under Mohammadpur thana in the city yesterday alleged that their shanties were being removed by some people claiming to have authorisation for earth filling in the area.

When this correspondent visited the spot adjacent to the Ring Road in Shaymoli yesterday evening, the dwellers alleged that their shanties were being removed by one Jagul. But Jagul could not show them any document, they said.

Some dwellers also alleged that influential political quarters including an MP were involved in the eviction.

When contacted Mohammadpur thana police said they know nothing about it.

The Commissioner of Ward No 42, which covers the area when contacted also denied that the slum dwellers were being evicted and earth filling was going on.

Maqbool Hossain, local MP, when contacted said he had not yet been informed about the eviction.

## Oil-like liquid spilling out of gas line

By Staff Correspondent

An oil-like liquid started spilling out from a household gas supply line of Titas Gas at East Nakhalpara in the city yesterday evening.

Tejgaon thana police said that the liquid smelt like kerosene and was coming out from three points in the supply line. Emergency teams from Titas Gas rushed to the spot and were working on the lines till filling of this report last. Police has been deployed as curious people poured into the area.

Titas Gas authorities could not be contacted last night for comment.

## Schoolgirl kidnapped

By JU Correspondent

A gang of armed men kidnapped a schoolgirl from the Jahangirnagar University (JU) campus Saturday night.

Savar thana police said the girl was kidnapped at around 10 pm from the central playground area of the campus.

Liza, a class ten student of the Ishpani School of Dhaka, went to the JU campus in the evening with her boyfriend, Zahurul Haq Shuvo — a student of Jagannath College.

The armed group kidnapped Liza. The girl rushed to the spot and nabbed Shuvo who was produced before the court yesterday.

Police were yet to rescue the girl and nab the kidnappers.

## Unscheduled debate

From Page 1

the Treasury and the Opposition benches to stop playing to the gallery.

Leader of the Opposition Begum Khaleda Zia demanded that the Treasury Bench members must withdraw the 'aspirative' comments. In case of their reluctance to do so, she threatened at least a token one minute walkout. She, however, called upon all the MPs to bury the past and discuss what they could do for the good of the nation. As the Chair abruptly adjourned the session at 10:51 pm, she, however, could not stage the walkout.

She was also not given the floor to give a 'personal clarification' on a remark made by Zillur Rahman.

LRD Minister Zillur Rahman also observed that the matter was subjudice and there was 'no denying the supremacy of the Supreme Court.'

As soon as Shaikh Razzak Ali finished Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed took the floor.

Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed said the government has full faith in the judiciary and added it was during the

## Teachers

From Page 1

ment in a statement yesterday praising the bold steps taken by the teachers, officials and employees of government administration, and law-enforcing agencies at different HSC examination centres during the first two days.

Sadique said an evil force has been active in educational institutions for long to destroy the sacred institution of the country.

"We cannot bow down to this force," he said with a call upon the students, teachers and guardians to make concerted efforts to resist the evil.

The teachers should take examinations properly, the minister said, adding that departmental action would be taken after a preliminary report against those who would fail to perform this duty.

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**PHILIPS**

## JS snippets

From Page 1

the same while in the Opposition.

Hitting of the desks with files was a common scene in the fifth parliament... unfortunate are these desks and the files," he said.

Given the floor to ask a supplementary, Gazi Mohammad Shahjahan of BNP found his microphone out of order. Following repeated bids to switch on his microphone, Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid who was in the chair told him, "Your microphone was tortured yesterday. That's why it's not functioning. You please speak without it."

At this, Shahjahan started speaking loudly, resulting in a noisy scene.

Later, the Chair came to salvage the BNP lawmaker by allowing him to speak over the microphone of another, sitting next to him.

## Man arrested for raping teenaged maid

By Staff Correspondent

Police arrested a 55-year-old man on a charge of raping his teenaged maid at Shahinbagh under Tejgaon thana in the city early yesterday.

Acting on a tip off, police held Mohabbat Ali and rescued the maid aged about 13 from the house. Later, the girl was sent to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) court for recording her statement, police said.

Father of four Mohabbat allegedly raped the maid for two consecutive nights as his wife and other family members were not in the house.

Police said Mohabbat had brought the girl about 10 days ago from his village home in Narsingdi district.

The maid narrated her ordeal to a neighbour who informed Tejgaon police immediately.

Meanwhile, police sent Mohabbat to the CMM court and were preparing for the medical examination of the maid.

## Newspaper employees to observe token work stoppage Wednesday

An extended meeting of central coordination committee comprising Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) and three federations of the newspaper industry was held at Jatiya Press Club yesterday, reports UNB.

Convenor of the committee Faez Imam presided over the meeting, said a press release.

The meeting decided to observe token work stoppage in all newspapers and news agencies from 11 am to 3 pm on Wednesday in protest against the extension of the time frame for announcement of the Wage Board Award.

It also decided to hold a rally at 11 am at the Jatiya Press Club premises and submit memoranda to the Prime Minister and the Speaker on the day.

## HC hearing

From Page 1

Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA). It was rejected on the ground of locus standi of the petitioner, according to a BELA press release.

The petitioner, however, preferred an appeal against the rejection and the Appellate Division allowed the appeal.

On January 9 this year, the Writ Bench of the HC issued a rule on the Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Development and Flood Control and five others.

The HC asked them to show cause as to why all related activities and implementation of FAP-20 should not be declared to have been undertaken without lawful authority and was of no legal effect.

## Ctg port

From Page 1

members for a meeting last night when a 7-hour meeting from 10 am with Shipping Minister ASM Abdur Rab ended inclusively yesterday.

A 10-member team of the Forum comprising all port users associations attended the meeting with the shipping minister in the capital and then met the Prime Minister at the Ganabhaban, Forum sources said.

The Port Users Forum earlier announced the phase-wise boycott programme in protest against what it said government's failure to give decision on use of private equipment in handling container cargo.

Meanwhile, cargo handling at Chittagong port was disrupted till 2 pm today due to delay in sending the message of postponement of the boycott programme by the Forum leaders who stayed in Dhaka, port officials said.

They said booking for labour were not made for today thinking that the boycott programme would take effect. So cargo handling work began late, they added.

## DSE chairman

From Page 1

But while talking to the BBC last evening, Hussain termed the decision to remove him from the post of chairman illegal, saying that the no-confidence motion procedure was not followed properly.

It will also take steps to remove Hussain as member of the council in a bid to fully reorganise the DSE.

Imtiyaz Hussain told UNB last night that his removal as chairman was totally illegal as the council cannot do so as per Article 92 of the Stock Exchange Ordinance.

"Only a three-fourth majority of the general members can impeach the chairman in an extraordinary general meeting. What the council members did today was totally illegal," he said.

Hussain said he was yet to take a decision whether he would go to the court to seek legal protection. "I'll have to consult my lawyers first before taking any decision," he added.

The DSE move followed a nosedive of the benchmark DSE price index, which was a result of huge sale-pressure by the general investors who were panicked after key DSE members were implicated in a share scam.

Imtiyaz Hussain, DSE vice-chairman Ahmed Iqbal Hasan and broker Rakibur Rahman were among others against whom a court issued warrants of arrest after the SEC filed cases against them.

The prices of Dhaka stocks ballooned many times during September-November period last year, but the bubble finally burst in mid-November. A probe committee found that the prices were manipulated.

## Bank borrowing

From Page 1

has also formed a bank reforms committee, he added.

In reply to another question, the minister said the economic condition of the country in the last two decades had never been so strong and stable as it is now.

He told the House that the loans which the banks were forced to sanction under political pressure during the last five years of BNP rule are yet to be paid back.

## Action Plan

From Page 1

strategy of 'mainstreaming' women's development into government policies and programmes.

The NAP has been prepared on the basis of Sectoral Needs Assessment reports of 13 ministries.

These ministries including of Agriculture, Local Government and Rural Development, Industries, Information, Education, Environment and Forestry, Health and Family Welfare, Social Welfare, Fisheries and Livestock, Labour and Manpower, Home Affairs and Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.

The actions proposed in the reports of the ministries for 'mainstreaming' women's issues for their advancement mainly are:

"Formulation of sectoral policies, amending allocation of business to integrate and incorporate needs and priorities of women in different sectors, increasing the number of female officers particularly at the decision making and management level.

"Providing technical and skill training, legal literacy and gender training. Collaborative efforts for proper implementation and monitoring of the programme.

Taking necessary measures to incorporate the Action Plan in the Fifth Five Year Plan.

## CHT hartal

From Page 1

The Parishad called the strike demanding inclusion of its leaders in the ongoing peace talks and an end to the eviction of non-tribals from the region.

All kinds of vehicles stayed off the roads and shops and markets remained closed in the three districts.

Attendance, in offices was thin.

JCD

From Page 1

Shahiduddin Chowdhury Annex, Habibun-Nabi Sohel and Selimuzzaman.

They urged the DU authorities to take action against those who were involved in Friday's incident.

They also urged the proctor of the university to resign immediately. Otherwise JCD would launch a greater movement, they warned. They alleged that the proctor was responsible for the incident.

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