

\$8m project for preparing nat'l water plan

By Staff Correspondent

The government is going to undertake an eight million US dollar project to formulate the National Water Management Plan (NWMP).

Official sources said that preparation of the project, aimed at efficient utilisation of water resources, will begin in July and is likely to be completed within three years.

Evaluation of the proposals submitted by six consortiums interested to frame the NWMP is likely to be completed within a week.

A five-member committee of experts evaluating those will then submit its report to the Ministry of Water Resources.

Experts from the European countries as well as Australia

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Acute shortage of fuel in N Bengal

From Our Correspondent

NATORE, May 19: There is an acute shortage of fuel in 16 northern districts as the supply of oil from the Baghabari depot remains stopped since Friday night due to a dispute between the depot and tank-lorry workers.

According to sources, a worker of the Baghabari oil depot died Thursday when a tank-lorry ran over him. Following the incident, the depot workers started an agitation against the tank-lorry workers and later stopped lifting oil from the depot and filling the tanks.

Meanwhile, taking advantage of the situation, some filling stations are realising higher prices, sometimes double.

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Pirojpur-1 seat

Repolling in one centre ordered

PIROJPUR, May 19: The District Election Tribunal today asked the authorities to hold fresh election at one centre and modify results of two others in Pirojpur-1 constituency, reports UNB.

In his verdict, Judge A K M Fazlur Rahman said the election results of the constituency should be declared afresh after holding elections at Ghangata Primary School centre and reviewing the results of two other centres.

Jamaat-e-Islami candidate Moulana Delwar Hossain Saidee won the seat in June 12 polls. The court gave the verdict following a complaint filed by Awami League's Shudhangsu Shekhar Halder who lost by 228 votes.

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Share scam

3 revision case hearing adjourned till May 24

By Court Correspondent

The hearing of three revision cases of share manipulation was adjourned yesterday till May 24.

Kazi Golam Rasul, Sessions Judge, Dhaka, adjourned the hearing upon a prayer for time by the prosecution side, filed by public prosecutor Altaf Hossain.

The three petitioners, Salman Rahman, Sohel Rahman and Samsuddoha were present in the court yesterday.

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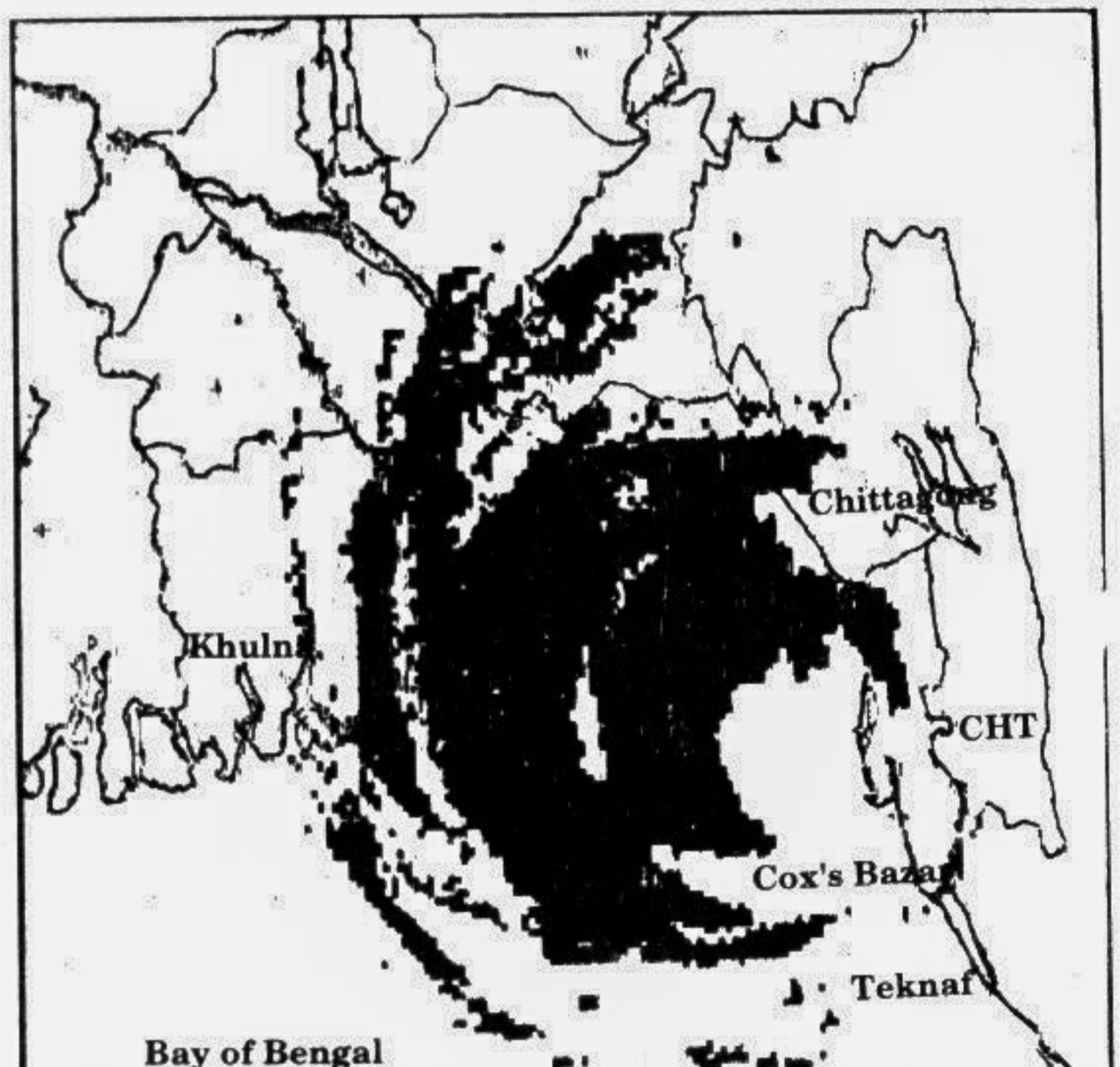
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Tidal surge in off-shore islands

## Hurricane hits coastal areas: 500 feared killed



A radar picture of the cyclone rolling over the Chittagong coast at 3:20 pm yesterday. —Photo: Met Office

At least 500 people were feared missing and several thousand injured as a powerful hurricane hit the country's southeastern coast yesterday, leaving a trail of death and destruction, reports UNB.

Official sources said about 400 people were feared killed in Cox's Bazar district and more than 100 fishermen reported missing in Patuakhali while five deaths were confirmed in Chittagong city.

The DIG of Chittagong Range Police, Abdur Rahim, who had wireless contacts with field level officials, told UNB correspondent Shahnoza at 11:30 lastnight that 300-400 people might have been killed in Teknaf, St Martin Island, Maheshkhali, Kutubdia and Ukhia, the worst cyclone-hit areas in Cox's Bazar.

The most deaths were feared caused by storm, tidal surge and house collapse, said the top divisional police official, who lost wireless contacts after 5 pm due to power failure.

Red Crescent sources said at least 100 fishermen were missing in Patuakhali during the

terrible storm. However, they could not say anything about the casualty in Cox's Bazar district.

Officials and volunteers engaged in rescue operation feared that the death toll might increase with detailed information available from remote and inaccessible islands of Cox's Bazar, Chittagong and other coastal districts.

The initiative has been taken in view of the amendment to the Bank Company Act, 1991, which stipulates that a person can no longer be a bank director if he is a defaulter with his own bank or any other bank. The amendment was gazetted recently.

Meanwhile, the central bank is seriously considering reinforcing rules to prevent the rescheduling of defaulted loans more than twice. A meeting between the central bank authorities and the chief executives of all banks held last week to discuss these measures, endorsed the central bank's initiatives.

Army and navy personnel have been deployed to conduct the rescue operation alongwith the civil administration. Some army units were engaged in clearing the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway which was blocked by fallen trees at some points.

All preparation have been taken to launch rescue and relief operation," said State Min-

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Keep everything ready to face eventualities: PM's directive

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina directed all concerned to do everything possible to face the eventualities of the cyclone that hit southeastern part of the country yesterday afternoon, reports UNB.

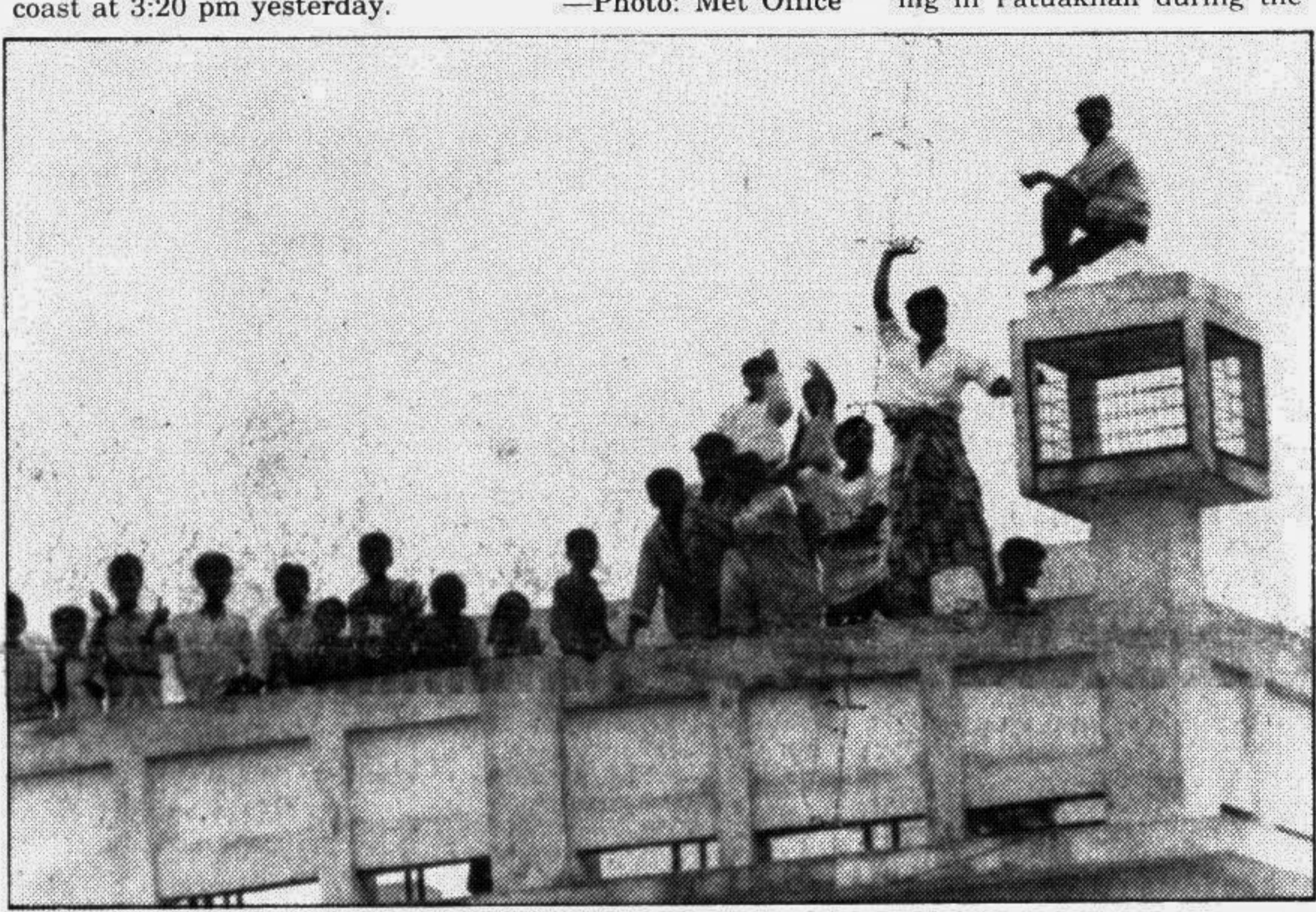
The Prime Minister, who postponed her Spain trip Sunday in the wake of a possible cyclone, yesterday visited the Relief and Disaster Management Ministry, SPARRSO and the monitoring cell at the PM office.

"Keep all equipment ready to provide back-up in the affected areas," she told the officials.

Army and navy personnel and volunteers are working with the civil administration to combat the natural calamity.

The Prime Minister visited the SPARRSO office at Agargaon and observed the photographic view of the cyclone in order to give directive for neces-

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People in coastal area in Chittagong took shelter on rooftops yesterday fearing tidal surge. —Star photo

Donors begin review meeting

## Govt rules out gas export

Donors began a four-day meeting in Dhaka yesterday to discuss the policy issues of Bangladesh's energy sector and draw up a strategy of future lending to the fund-starved sector, reports UNB.

Energy Minister Mohammad Noor Uddin Khan opened the meeting at the city's Petro Centre, highlighting the prospect of the energy sector and its future requirement of financial and technical supports.

He gave an overview of the energy industry to the representatives of eight donor agencies and countries who had given loans to the sector but suspended new lendings creating a fund constraint to the sector.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB), one of the largest donors to the energy sector, has sponsored the high-profile meeting that will assess the performance of the sector and its future fund requirements.

Officials and experts of the

World Bank, the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECD) of Japan, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), Russia, Britain, Germany and Norway are attending the meet.

The minister told the donors that the meeting would benefit Bangladesh's energy sector which has been going through comprehensive reforms to attract capital to meet the future power and energy needs.

He pointed out that power tariffs had been raised, efforts taken to reduce system losses further, steps taken to generate electricity in private sector and rationalisation of the Power Development Board was being done.

Besides, formulation of the security package, implementation of agreement and the power-purchase agreement have already been completed and are likely to be approved within a week, Khan said.

He said the country would require 3150 megawatt power

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by 2000 and 4600 mw by 2005. An investment of Tk 18,500 crore will be needed for generating power by 2002, but the government can not afford the colossal amount, he told the donors.

In this context, he said many renowned international power companies had expressed their keen interest to set up power plants in the country following the adoption of private-sector power policy.

Ruling out gas export, he said there are huge demands of gas for plants of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and liquefied natural gas (LNG), power generation and fertiliser production.

The gas to be explored is going to be utilised fully," he said. Khan also informed the donors that in future, the government would carry out privatisation programme in the energy sector.

About coal, he said there are

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## Kesri under pressure to quit in favour of Sonia

NEW DELHI, May 19: India's Congress (I) Party, smarting under corruption scandal sand its worst electoral defeat in more than a century, is facing yet another leadership crisis, newspapers said today, reports AFP.

They said pressure was mounting on party president Sitaram Kesri to quit in favour of Sonia Gandhi, the enigmatic widow of former premier Rajiv Gandhi, whose mother Indira and grandfather Jawaharlal Nehru steered the Congress for much of the century.

The demand for the Italian-born Sonia, who announced her formal entry into politics this month, received a boost Sunday with a senior provincial leader resigning after blaming Kesri for party mismanagement.

Kesri took over the reins of the party in September after former Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao was virtually forced out in disgrace following his implication in several corruption scandals. Rao has denied all charges.

Santosh Singh Randhawa,

the party head for the northern state of Punjab where the Congress had to relinquish power after being trounced in state elections this year, asked Sonia Gandhi to intervene and save the party.

"I appeal for a new leader under Sonia Gandhi to protect democratic norms in the Congress," he told the Punjabi-based Tribune Daily.

Santosh Singh Randhawa, who won the

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Sonia Gandhi

India's first film actress dead

NEW DELHI, May 19: Kamalabai Gokhale, the first woman to star in an Indian film has died, the Indian Express newspaper reported today, says AFP.

It said Gokhale, who made her screen debut in 1913 in the film "Bhasmusur Mohini," based on Hindu legend, died on Saturday in the western city of Pune. She was 97.

Gokhale, who was then 13, was the first Indian woman to act in a movie. Prior to her debut, female roles were played by men.

Sambhu Mitra dead

CALCUTTA, May 19: The legendary theatrical personality Sambhu Mitra, who dominated the Bengali stage for over five decades, died at his city residence early this morning. He was 81, reports PTI.

Sambhu Mitra is survived by his daughter Saoli Mitra, an eminent dramatist. Family sources said he died from heart attack.

Sambhu Mitra, who won the

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Rush to cyclone affected areas, Khaleda asks partymen

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia has directed her party leaders and workers in the coastal belt to rush to the cyclone-hit areas in aid of the distressed humanity, reports UNB.

"We are extremely worried ... I've already given necessary instructions to the party leaders in coastal districts and they have in the meantime started helping the distressed people," she said while addressing a huge gathering of freshers who joined BNP yesterday.

Begum Zia also asked the partymen to extend all support to the cyclone-hit people and work round-the-clock so that loss of lives and property can be minimised.

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BB updating list of defaulting bank directors

By Inam Ahmed

Bangladesh Bank is updating the list of bank directors who have taken loans from their own banks or any other bank, according to highly placed official sources.

The initiative has been taken in view of the amendment to the Bank Company Act, 1991, which stipulates that a person can no longer be a bank director if he is a defaulter with his own bank or any other bank.

The amended act states that once a director's post falls vacant, the bank's dues will be recovered by selling off the defaulter's shares. It also says that any director who has lost his post cannot be re-instated within a year of repaying the loans.

Meanwhile, the central bank

is seriously considering reinforcing rules to prevent the rescheduling of defaulted loans more than twice. A meeting between the central bank authorities and the chief executives of all banks held last week to discuss these measures, endorsed the central bank's initiatives.

According to the amended

act, a director will lose his office if he fails to repay loans or interest on loans from any bank or financial institution within two months of being served with notice on their overdue status.

He would also lose his office if he failed to repay loans which

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SC Bar Assoc meet ends in pandemonium

Two groups of Supreme Court lawyers clashed over a requisition meeting convened yesterday to condemn the comment of Suranit Sengupta MP in Parliament on the judgement of a High Court bench, reports UNB.

The meeting plunged into a pandemonium when SC Bar Association President Barrister Nazmul Huda barred Attorney General Barrister K S Nabi who, on a point of order, questioned the constitutional validity of such a meeting.

Nabi said proceedings of the Parliament cannot be questioned by any court of law.