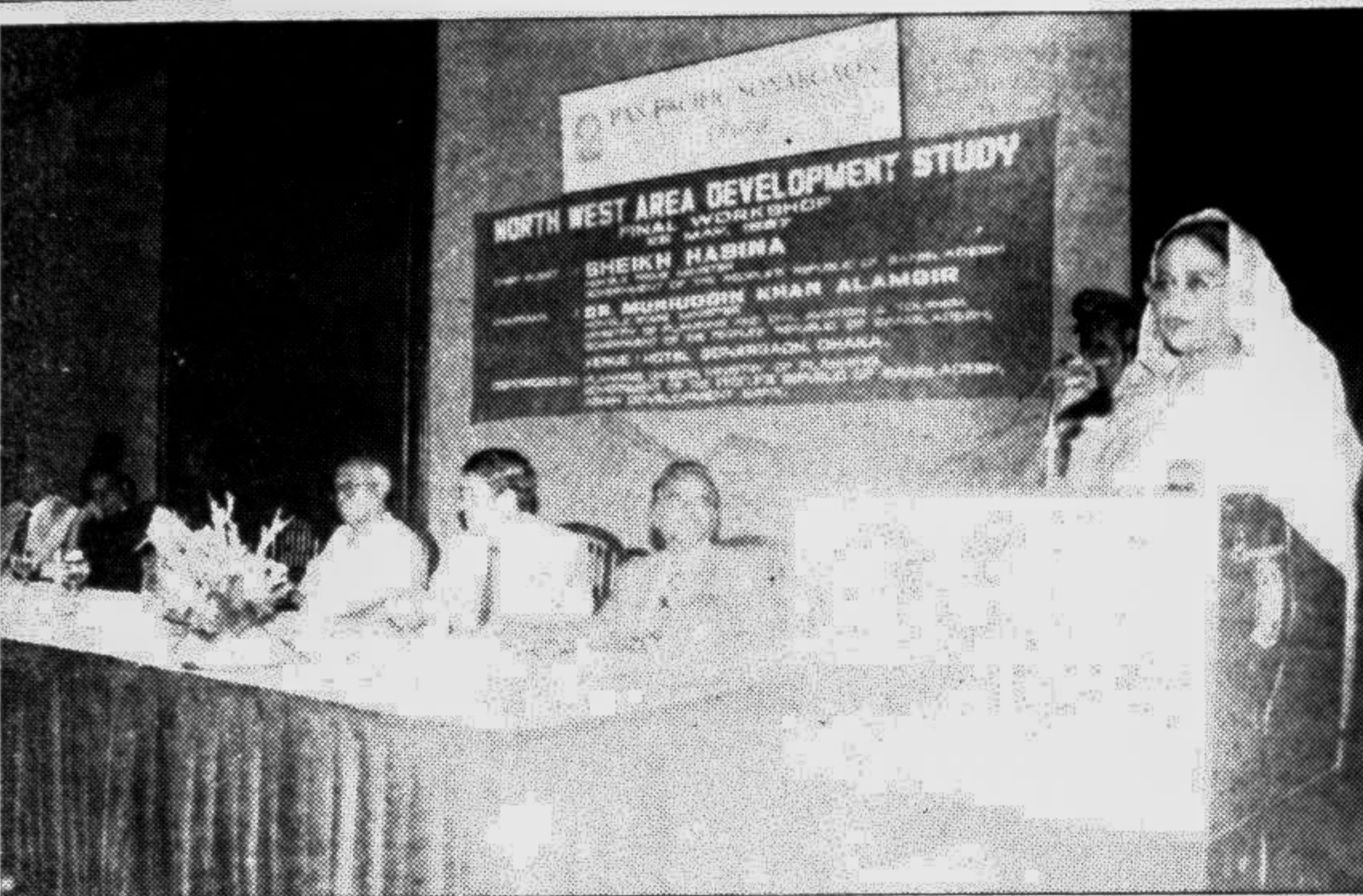


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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressing the final workshop on North-West Area Development Study at a city hotel yesterday. —PID photo

Judiciary enjoying full freedom: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the judiciary to take more effective steps to ensure the protection of law for the masses and establish their fundamental rights as guaranteed by the Constitution, reports UNB.

She also called upon the judiciary and the law-enforcing agencies to remove obstacles to establishing the rule of law.

Opening a 3-day conference marking silver jubilee of Bangladesh Bar Council at the Shilpakala Academy in the city, Hasina said her government is committed to ensuring an independent judiciary and people's fundamental rights by keeping law and judicial system above narrow political interest.

The judiciary is responsible for protecting the fundamental rights of the people and upholding the Constitution, she said, adding the government is taking steps to separate the judiciary from the executive.

The judiciary is enjoying full freedom under this government, the Prime Minister told the function.

About delays in disposal of Cyclone: Frozen food sector in Ctg suffers Tk 338cr loss

CHITTAGONG, May 28: The frozen food sector in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar suffered a loss of Tk 338 crore in last week's cyclone, according to a press release issued by Bangladesh Frozen Foods Exporters Association.

In Chittagong and Cox's Bazar shrimps are produced in 1440 shrimp farms covering 19,500 hectre land.

The cyclone damaged the infrastructures of those farms particularly, roofs, pump house, generator room, blower room, hatchery operation line, water line and power line, in addition to causing death to shrimp fries and mother shrimps, the release added.

Fair plan

From Page 1 We have undertaken this project just after two months of assuming the responsibility of running the country," Hasina said and added that implementation of the project was started with top priority.

Referring to the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge, the Prime Minister said the bridge has created a new hope among us in respect of the development of the country.

Direct road and railway communications will be established between the two regions of the country after the construction of the bridge, she added.

She said construction of the bridge will accelerate the pace of socio-economic development of the North-West region, laying a foundation of higher rate of growth in the national economic development.

Thanking the Asian Development Bank for its cooperation, the Prime Minister mentioned that the Bank has taken a praiseworthy initiative of encouraging the development partners to undertake development projects in the post-study period.

State Minister for Planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, ADB Resident Representative in Dhaka Bhanupol Horayangura, FBCCI President Yusuf Abdullah Harun, Planning Division Secretary Shah Mohammad Farid and study project director K M S A Kaiser also spoke on the occasion.

Ershad to take action against 2 rebels

By Staff Correspondent Jatiya Party chief HM Ershad has decided to take disciplinary action against those trying to tarnish the image of the party, according to party sources.

The decision was taken after Ershad had succeeded in 'isolating' Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury from the two other rebels — Shah Moazzam Hosain and Kazi Zafar Ahmed.

The three senior leaders of the party, through joint statements earlier, had challenged the leadership of Ershad in the party.

Ershad had invited the three rebel leaders to attend a meeting with him yesterday. Of the three, only Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury attended the meeting, which was also participated by Nazimur Rahman Manju, the sources said.

Shah Moazzam and Kazi Zafar were not available for comment.

Meanwhile, Ershad has called a meeting of the JP presidium on May 31, said a press release.

DU to open

From Page 1 Prof Azad Chowdhury said that the Japanese government had assured of financial and technological help for establishment of the centre for science and technology.

Tales of phone bills

By Sharier Khan

The billing system of the Bangladesh Telephone and Telegraph Board (BTB) remains age-old and complicated, aggravating the sufferings of its clients, although the BTB earns an annual net profit of over Tk 700 crore.

It is very common that telephone bills reach the clients after expiring of the date for depositing the money, some clients alleged. In addition, the bills do not reach clients regularly. As a result, clients have to visit the Revenue Department of the T&T frequently to update their bills, otherwise their telephones get disconnected.

Once the line is disconnected, at least seven days are needed to restore it unless someone can influence the officials concerned, they alleged.

Besides, the T&T authorities, in most cases, don't pay any heed to complaints of 'ghost billing.' If anyone insists on his complaint, the authorities insist on paying the 'disputed' bills first and tells the client that the 'disputed' bill will be reviewed. But the review may take upto two years, the clients alleged.

The T&T authorities disconnect phone lines, in most cases, without any reminder if a client fails to pay bills for three consecutive months.

In fact, I now collect my bills from the T&T revenue department every month," said one Abul Kashem of Dhanmondi. "In the past, they disconnected my telephone line three times because I was a defaulter. I was a defaulter because I never received the bills."

The T&T authorities take some three weeks to prepare all the bills and dispatch those through mail, giving the clients some two weeks' time to pay their dues. For example, the telephone bill for May is prepared by June 22, mailed by June 25 and the clients are asked to pay their dues by July

10. "We now have 2.5 lakh clients in the city," an official of the BTB said. "When we post 2.5 lakh bills between 23rd and 25th of the month, the postal department faces enormous pressure. I think the postal department is unable to dispatch all these mails in time," he said.

Depositing bills with the banks is another tiresome job for clients. After payment of the bills, the banks usually take 20 to 30 days to send back the deposit slips to the revenue department of the BTB.

"By that time, T&T would issue another bill and add an arrears which I have already paid," complained one Afzal Hossain of Shahjahanpur. "Therefore I have to go to the T&T Revenue Department again to update my bills."

According to BTB officials, there are two billing systems, computerised and manual. Computerised billing was introduced in the Eighties when digital telephone system was introduced in the city. However, billing for digital lines is not fully computerised as computer readings do not show arrears.

"To calculate arrears, the bills are checked manually by the revenue department. Then needs time," an official said.

Billing for analogue phones are done manually, and therefore some three weeks are required for the task, he said.

Shortage of manpower is another reason for the slow billing, he said, adding there was no recruitment in the T&T department since 1983.

In many countries, telephone bills are posted to clients every three months and clients are given three months time to pay their dues, the official said. In some other countries, the bills are totally computerised and clients receive their bills in the first or the second week of a month and gets adequate time to deposit their dues.

Satinelle Removes hair by the root Transcom Electronics Limited Official licensee of Philips Electronics N.V. for lighting products, radio and TV sets

Proposed HR commission should be free from govt, political influence

A symposium in Dhaka yesterday underscored the need for an independent, autonomous, credible and effective National Human Rights Commission in the country to protect and safeguard human rights, reports UNB.

It stressed that the proposed commission should be accessible to the common people, the victims of human rights violation, beneficial to the people from all walks of life, and free from government and political influence.

The day-long symposium on the composition, powers and functions of National Human Rights Commission in Bangladesh was participated by ministers, jurists, UN representatives, human rights activists, NGO executives and other professionals.

It was organised by the Institutional Development of Human Rights in Bangladesh (IDHRB), a project of the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, which is conducting an action research study on human rights situation in the country.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Abdul

Matin Khasru, speaking as chief guest at the symposium, said the government is trying to devise a mechanism so that majority of people could have access to justice, which is their right.

About the proposed National Human Rights Commission, he said, "It will be an institution of people from all walks of life. It will help them with its expert opinion... Let's make it autonomous, independent, credible and viable."

The minister said it must be ensured that the commission would not face by any political or government interference.

Addressing the symposium, UNDP resident representative David E Lockwood said there should be a consensus among the government, NGOs and members of civil society in constituting a National HR Commission that could redress human rights violation.

Special Adviser on National Institutions to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Brian Burckell said accessibility and responsibility are the first and foremost quality which a National HR body

should have. Prof Gudmundur Alfredsson of Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law of Sweden said the function of HR commission should not only be investigatory and advisory, but also promotional and educative.

He suggested that a mechanism like National HR Commission should attain international standard and credibility.

The PRA report identified some problems regarding human rights such as demand of dowry, domestic violence by husband, less access to public health services, polygamy, discrimination against women, human rights abuse by police, non-registration of marriage and teasing of school-going girls.

The IDHRB study which started in July 1996 reveals that 90 per cent of the people never heard the term Human Rights. They prefer remedies at doorsteps and, according to their preference, they use to go first to the village elders for arbitration, and then UP chairman, court, local MP and police.

Khaleda opens photo show on Zia today

By Staff Correspondent

As part of the BNPs 10-day program to observe the 16th anniversary of the death of Ziaur Rahman, the party's cultural wing, JASAS, will arrange a photo exhibition on the life and works of Zia at the Shilpakala Academy at 11 this morning.

BNP chairperson and leader of the opposition Begum Khaleda Zia will open the exhibition.

The Jatiyatabadi Sechhyasebok Dal, another front organisation of BNP, will hold a discussion on "Zia: National Economy and Volunteered Labour" at the Jatiya Press Club auditorium at 4 pm tomorrow.

Noted personalities will participate in the discussion meeting. Begum Zia will also be present.

On May 30, the day Zia was assassinated in an abortive military coup 16 years ago, Begum Zia and other central leaders of BNP will distribute sweets among the poor people in the city. Besides, the party will arrange kangalee bhoj, milad mahfil, photo exhibition and play the recorded speeches of Shaheed Ziaur Rahman in different parts of the city. A discussion meeting will be held at the Shilpakala Academy at 4 in the afternoon.

In the morning, Begum Zia and other leaders will visit Zia's mazar at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar and offer fataha and place wreaths there.

DU polls

From Page 1 Three panels — pro-Awami League Blue Panel, pro-BNP White Panel and left-leaning Pink Panel — are contesting the election.

Meanwhile, a dissident group of White Panel have also submitted separate nomination papers and will contest the polls.

They have also circulated a leaflet inserting six new names from the original White Panel, dropping six names from it.

Foreign investors participate in Ctg business roundtable

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, May 28: A delegation of foreign investors arrived in the port city today.

Soon after arrival, the delegation visited the Chittagong Export Processing Zone.

The members of the delegation also attended a business roundtable conference sponsored by MM Ispahani Ltd.

Presided over by Salman Ispahani, director of M M Ispahani Ltd, the conference was addressed by the members of the delegation David O' Rear and Christopher F Bruton.

Others who took part in the discussion were Qamrul Islam Chowdhury, general manager of James Finlay Company, Anis A Khan, senior manager of Grindlays Bank, Wadud Ullah, Shamsul Kamal, chief executive of Chittagong Stock Exchange, and Kamal Uddin Ahmed, vice president of the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

They spoke about the investment opportunities available in Chittagong.

Christopher F Bruton said, "We are very impressed as Chittagong has a lot of industrial potentialities."

PAC reviews 105 audit objections

A meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts of the Jatiya Sangsad was held yesterday with its chairman SM Akram in the chair, reports BSS.

According to an official press release, the meeting was informed that since the constitution of the committee Tk 43 crore has been realised, Tk nine crore was adjusted and recommendations have been made to take departmental measures to adjust Tk 17 crore.

The meeting reviewed the activities of eight previous meetings of the committee and 105 audit objections.

Leakage of question papers: JU probe today submits report to VC

JU Correspondent

The probe committee on the leakage of question papers for admission test of Mathematics Department of Jahangirnagar University this year has submitted its report to the Vice Chancellor yesterday.

But the report was not made public.

The four-member body, headed by Prof Mohammad Masum, was formed on May 14. Following the allegation of the leakage of question papers, the results of the admission test were cancelled.

The VC, Prof Amirul Islam Chowdhury, said the report would be published in the national dailies after consultations with the University Syndicate.

4 vie for Cong presidency

NEW DELHI, May 28: India's largest political party, the Congress in its 110 years of history faces a contest for its presidency for the third time when four of its top leaders including the incumbent president Sitaram Kesri filed nomination for the post election to which will take place on June 9, reports BSS.

Apert from present Congress president Sitaram Kesri the other three top notches who filed nomination papers for the party presidency, are former Maharashtra chief minister A R Antulay, leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha Sharan Pawar and former union minister Rajesh Pilot.

Congress spokesman announced after the deadline for receiving nomination papers ended here today.

However, the last date for withdrawal of nomination paper is June two when a clear picture will emerge as to the contest for the Congress presidency.

Diarrhoea claims 29 in Noakhali

NOAKHALI, May 28: Twenty-nine people died of diarrhoea and more than 3,844 were attacked in different thanas of the district last week, civil surgeon office said today, reports BSS.

The affected thanas are: Begumganj, Sadar, Companiganj and Bati.

According to civil surgeon's office, 8,227 people were attacked at different thanas of the district with diarrhoea last month.

Doctors attributed the cause of the outbreak of the water borne disease to short supply of safe water and absence of awareness among the people.

Looted goods worth Tk 18 lakh recovered in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, May 28: A special team of the Double-mooning police after a massive hunt recovered a huge quantity of looted goods of a garments factory worth about Taka 18 lakh from different parts of the district and city during the last 24 hours ending at 6 pm today, reports BSS.

According to Double-mooning police, the team led by acting commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police and Assistant Commissioner (Port), in the drive arrested four persons.

Police first arrested one Nirmal Chandra Das and according to his statement the rest three were arrested and finally the goods were recovered from Anwara, Patiya and other parts of the city.

The recovered goods included 19 sewing machines with 18 covers and 18 electric motors.

Pabna transport owners, workers begin strike

PABNA, May 28: Road communication between Dhaka and northern parts of the country was snarled following a non-stop transport strike, reports UNB.

Pabna Transport Owners' Group and Transport Workers' Union today called the strike protesting the terrorist acts of 'Atique Bahini' at Gatabi bus terminal in the capital.

Addressing a joint press conference in Pabna, leaders of the Transport Owners' Group and the Transport Workers' Union alleged that members of the 'Atique Bahini' beat several booking managers at Gatabi bus terminal as they refused to pay them toll.

Abul Barkat Khan, general secretary of the Owners' Group, demanded immediate arrest of Atique and his associates.

"We will continue the strike until the terrorists are arrested," he warned.

Earlier, they submitted memoranda to Deputy Commissioner and Police Super of the district to press the demand.

Indonesia goes to polls amid tight security today

JAKARTA, May 28: After weeks of campaign violence, the government says more than 25,000 soldiers and police will stand guard tomorrow while Indonesians vote in parliamentary elections, reports AP.

Nearly 300 people were killed during the official 27-day campaign period, most in auto accidents during chaotic street parades and others in riots of fighting between supporters of rival parties.

There are also threats that some frustrated voters might protest sweeping restrictions on political activity by boycotting the vote for 425 seats in the largely ceremonial, 500-member parliament. The other 75 seats are reserved for the military.

The government says 25,000 security personnel are to guard polling stations in Jakarta, and thousands more would be on duty in other parts of the country.

"Don't worry. Just go to your polling booths and we will guard your safety," Jakarta military chief Maj Gen Sutiyoso said in comments published on the front page of the newspaper Jakarta Post.

Urban population

From Page 1 and the year 2000 Bangladesh's population would grow at a rate of 1 per cent while its urban growth rate would be 5.2 per cent.

The report — which contained global demographic statistics — was formally released by a UNFPA representative at a press conference held at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

It said that the country's population, which currently stands at 122 million, was likely to rise to 182 million by the year 2025. At present, 18 per cent of the population live in urban areas.

Tripura team due in Khagrachhari today

CHITTAGONG, May 28: A 15-member delegation of the Tribal Welfare Association of Tripura state of India arrives at Khagrachhari hill district tomorrow, reports BSS.

The delegation will see for themselves the rehabilitation programmes undertaken by the government for the repatriated tribals.

According to official sources here, members of the delegation including three high officials of the Tripura state will arrive through Ramgarh border point.

Deputy Commissioner of Khagrachhari Mohammed Ismail will receive the delegation at the border point.

The delegation led by acting chairman of the Tribal Welfare Association Ranjit Narayan Tripura will stay in Khagrachhari till May 31 and visit different rehabilitation centres at Ramgarh, Dighinala and Talbachhari thanas.

3 held for throwing acid on female garments worker

By Staff Correspondent Three persons were arrested yesterday for allegedly throwing acid on a teenage female garments worker in Gadarahat area under Mirpur thana Monday evening.

Police held Abdul Latif, Manik and Joyal Abedin during a raid near the Sony cinema hall at Mirpur. Police suspected that the arrested men threw acid on Jesmin, 14, when she was sitting beside a window in their house.

Daughter of Md Ramzan, Jesmin sustained serious burn injuries in her face and was under treatment at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

PM: Japan

From Page 1 hold talks with her Japanese counterpart, covering the entire gamut of bilateral relations as well as regional and international issues of common concern.

Hasina, who looks forward to visiting Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines in September, is expected to discuss with the leader of the economic super power the expansion of trade and market facilities in Asia, Far East and Pacific region.

The Bangladesh leader is expected to visit various Japanese industrial belts and complexes and meet with business magnates.

Japan, the largest bilateral donor to Bangladesh, has been extending assistance to its various sectors including energy, health, roads and transport, rural development, ship building and textile.

Sheikh Hasina, as the Prime Minister, has so far visited the United States, China, India, Pakistan, the Maldives and Italy.

She is scheduled to visit Turkey in the second week of June to attend the D-8 summit in Istanbul. The D-8 comprises Bangladesh, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria and Egypt.

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