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The World on Time



Leader of the Opposition and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia with the members of Zia Shishu Kishore Sangathan who met her at her official residence in the city yesterday on return from their visit to Ankara. — Star photo

Tk 691cr project to develop JMB access road

By Naimul Haq

A Tk 691 crore scheme has been approved by the government to develop selected sections of the national highway on the eastern side of Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge (JMB) under the Jamuna Bridge Access Roads Project, a high official of the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) told The Daily Star.

The project, likely to be started in December this year and completed in 2000, will be funded by the Japanese government, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Bangladesh government. ADB will give Tk 297 crore, OECF, on behalf of the Japanese government, will provide Tk 214 crore and Bangladesh government Tk 180 crore.

The total length of selected sections of the highway is 142 kilometres. The development work will include making it a double-lane highway, except the 14 km Mirpur-Savar section which will be widened to have four lanes and carriageway. The road will be 12.2 metres wide, having a pavement width of 7.3 metres and a hard shoulder of 1.2 metres on both sides of the road. The project will be implemented in the main transport corridor of Jamuna Bridge — Dhaka-Chittagong, the official said.

The project will involve development of 75.5 km stretch of the road — Nabinagar to Chandra, 16 km; Mirpur to Savar, 14 km; Demra to Daudkandi, 25.5 km and from Barierhat (Feni bypass road) towards Chittagong, 20 km. ADB will give Tk 297 cr and Bangladesh government Tk 94 cr for this.

Besides, the road from Joydevpur to Kaliakoir, 26.6 km, Kaliakoir to Korotia, 21.3 km and Korotia to Tangail, 18.6 km — totalling 66.5 km — will be developed under the project. OECF will give Tk 214 cr and Bangladesh government Tk 86 cr for this.

The project was identified through the 'Road Master Plan' prepared during 1990-92. The design for the road development was included in the Fourth Five-Year Plan and it was finalised in October, 1995.

"At present the road sections concerned are in bad shape. The geometric alignment of the roads are not perfect. They need

Govt yet to pay Louis Kahn's firm for design of Nat'l Sectt

By Staff Correspondent

The Works Ministry has not paid the bill of 60,000 US dollars to Louis I Kahn's David Wisdom and Associates of Philadelphia for drawing the plan of the National Secretariat Complex at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in 1974, sources in the ministry disclosed.

Renowned architect Louis I Kahn drafted the plan before his death. However, construction of the NSC is yet to begin. Henry Wilcot of the company has sent several reminders to the ministry to pay the bill but to no avail, the sources said.

The then government had asked Kahn to prepare the plan for the secretariat complex to maintain a balance in the landscape of the area. Louis I Kahn had drafted the plan for the monumental Jatiya Sangsad complex at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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Ershad tells Saudi Gazette AL govt may have to call early polls

Former President H M Ershad, now visiting Saudi Arabia, said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government might have to call early elections if the economic and security situation in the country do not improve quickly, reports UNB.

"If they do not improve the situation quickly, elections might be inevitable," he said in an interview with the Saudi Gazette published on Saturday, according to a message faxed here yesterday.

Asked if he expected the Awami League government to complete its term, Ershad said: "I have some doubt about that. They may have to go for an early election. That is my feeling. This is also a general feeling."

Regarding assessment of Sheikh Hasina's 13-month government, the deposed President said the time had not yet come to give a judgement, but this is better than the BNP.

"Sheikh Hasina has to take care of the debris, the rubbish left behind by the BNP. It will take time and she is trying hard," added Ershad, the Jatiya Party chairman.

He was asked if he was satisfied with the present government's performance. "Not finally," he said. "She could have done better."

Despite ideological difference between AL and JP, Ershad said, he supported Sheikh Hasina "because I wanted Awami League to come to power so that people could compare it with the BNP and find out which government is better."

When his opinion was sought about the present government, Ershad categorically said the economy and law and order are in bad situation.

"The border with India is almost open and Indian goods are flowing in. Some of them

are coming through the proper channel and some through illegal. The industrial sector is in ruins. Textile mills are closing down. Workers are being laid off," he said.

Regarding growing relations with India, the former President recalled the SAARC and said in the modern world you cannot keep aloof, specially from the neighbours. "But how close should one go without compromising our sovereignty and security is the main thing."

When his comment was sought on his position on Bangladesh giving land route to India, Ershad said: "There are two things — one is the highway and the other is the transit right. The Asian Highway is acceptable. It is a good thing as it will open up our borders with other countries."

"But," he went on, "we oppose the transit route. The Chittagong port is not enough to handle the cargo that will be going to the eastern states of India. Our road condition is not good enough either."

"We are afraid that military hardware will be transported through this route. We are also afraid that on the way it might be offloaded in our territory," he said, adding "in a way, we oppose."

However, the JP Chairman said, "I have put a condition that if India or the World Bank develops a deep seaport for us, in addition to the Chittagong port, we have no objection. There should be restriction on military personnel and hardware movement."

Ershad said he was still hopeful about the future of SAARC. "We are not very sure about the objective of the sub-regional grouping. So long it is an agreement, it is all right. However, it should not harm the overall interest of the SAARC."

2 JCD leaders held BNP gheraoes Shibpur thana

NARSINGDI, July 20: Opposition BNP and its front organisations today gheraoed the Shibpur police station protesting the arrest of two JCD leaders, reports UNB.

Police said Monir Hossain, VP of Shibpur Shaheed Asad Government College students' union, and joint secretary Faruk Ahmed were arrested from their residence early today in a case filed by Dual of BCL for assaulting him.

Protesting the arrest, thana BNP, Juba Dal and JCD brought out a procession and held a meeting demanding immediate release of the two leaders.

Two killed

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The cropland owners were demanding opening of the embankment to save 700 acres of land from waterlogging.

The owners of the east and west sides cultivate fish in their waterbodies getting lease from the government.

The bodies were sent to Sadar hospital for autopsy. However, none was arrested in this connection.

Surcharge

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charge amounting to 150 US dollars will be imposed on 20 feet-size containers and 300 dollars on 40 feet-size containers, port sources added.

Meanwhile the Chittagong Port authorities have protested the move of CFTC about imposition of surcharge, a senior port official said.

Earlier, CFTC imposed such surcharge on container cargo, but it was later withdrawn when congestion eased at the port.

Magurchhara fire

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circumstances, the site which was earlier selected and where preliminary work was done to drill the 'relief well', may not be possible to be used for the purpose, the official apprehended. It has become uncertain when the mouth of the burning gas well will be capped, he said.

The Bangladesh railway yesterday suspended train service through the gas well area due to sudden intensification of the fire.

BSS added: Petrobangla said in Dhaka yesterday, that the Occidental had taken new measures to ensure safety in Magurchhara gas field area.

In a statement, the Petrobangla said that the people should not be afraid of the measures being taken by the Occidental for the sake of safety in the gas field area.

It said that attention of Petrobangla had been drawn to reports published in a section of the press yesterday about the latest situation of the affected gas well number one at Magurchhara in Moulvibazar district.

A review meeting to assess the latest situation of the gas well was held at the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources with its Secretary Dr. Taufique Elahi Chowdhury in the chair.

Representatives of the Occidental informed the meeting that several small flames were being seen in the fire-affected gas field area.

But, they said, there was no apprehension of fire accident as

5 hurt in fire caused by gas leakage

By Staff Correspondent

At least five members of a family were injured when a fire broke out due to leakage in gas line at a house in Lalbagh in the city yesterday.

The victims identified as Monjurul Islam, 40, his wife Rowshan Ara, 30, son Zahir, 16, daughter Kulsum Begum, 15 and nephew Alauddin, 14, were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Hospital sources quoting relatives said, the accident occurred when one of the family members in the house on an electric switch at about 5 am. The fire sparked off in the kitchen room as it was engulfed by the gas that leaked out from the gas line throughout the whole night. The windows of the kitchen were closed at the time.

NBR clarification on income tax return for phone subscribers

The provision of compulsory submission of income tax returns for the telephone subscribers has been withdrawn through the winding up budget speech made by the Finance Minister, an NBR press release said yesterday, reports BSS.

But that has not been withdrawn from the Finance Act, 1997, due to procedural problems. Necessary steps are being taken to amend the concerned provision, it added.

The NBR made it clear that none will have to submit income tax return as a telephone subscriber. If any quarter creates pressure in this regard, the aggrieved persons are requested to inform directly to the complaint number of NBR or dial 9331880, 838101-8/285, 320, the press release said.

Admission to JU honours classes from Aug 3

By JU Correspondent

Admission to the first year Honours classes of Jahangirnagar University (JU) will begin on August 3. The admission from the merit list will continue till August 12 while from the waiting list from August 17 to 21.

The results of the admission last for the 1996-97 session were published on July 16. A total of 919 students, including 327 female students and 10 each from the tribal, sports and freedom fighters' children quota, will be admitted this year.

The family members of the Pakistanis in a representation to the Prime Minister of Pakistan have appealed to take up the case with the Vietnamese government for their immediate repatriation.

The sailors have not been paid their wages for the last two years and have been confined to the ship on outer anchorage in the Ho-Chi-Minh Port city waters.

The Pakistani seafarers, according to the representation, were hired in August 1995 by a Karachi-based shipping agent, Terra Marine Agencies, to serve on a foreign flag vessel, MV Golden Fortune.

The Chief Engineer has had talks with the Public Works minister and the three sites were discussed, said an official of the PWD.

He said it was necessary to build the complex firstly because the ministers needed security. Secondly, the cost of accommodating them was so high that the money spent on one minister's accommodation for five years was equivalent to the cost of building a decent house.



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Dhaka-N'ganj air-conditioned bus service launched

By Ehsanul Haque

An air-conditioned bus service in the private sector was launched on the Dhaka-Narayanganj route yesterday.

Communications Minister Anwar Hussain Manju inaugurated the service at a function at Narayanganj.

Bangladesh Metro Bus Company Limited has commissioned the service after it had earlier introduced the air-conditioned service on the Motihheel-Uttara route in the capital last January.

Initially, 25 thirty-two seater buses will operate daily on the 20 kilometre route. The buses will take the route through Chashara-Adamjee-Chittagong road, having two stops. The route will change when the under-construction Dhaka-Narayanganj link road is completed.

Inaugurating the service, the Communications Minister said, the work of link road would be completed during the current fiscal year.

He hoped that within the next five years the country's road communication would further improve because of the government's policy of developing the infrastructure.

Anwar Hussain said, 200 double-decker buses would be imported. Of these seven buses under BRTC would operate between Dhaka and Narayanganj.

Fine arts students threaten to gear up agitation

By DU Correspondent

The students of the Institute of Fine Arts of Dhaka University have threatened to intensify their ongoing agitation if their demand was not accepted by today.

The students continuing their agitation for the last 27 days, gave the threat at a press conference yesterday.

The students started their agitation protesting the decision of the university authorities to construct a multi-storied shopping centre-cum-art gallery by demolishing the Shah Nawaz Bhaban.

The Shah Nawaz Bhaban, situated near the New Market, is the only residential building for the students of the Fine Arts Institute.

The students are demanding the construction of a full-fledged residential hall at the site.

The building was named after Shah Nawaz who was killed during the Liberation War in 1971.

One to be hanged in Barisal jail tonight for killing daughter

A man will be hanged to death at Barisal central jail after midnight tonight for killing his daughter in 1988, an official handout said, reports UNB.

Abdul Khaleque Mir, who was awarded death sentence by a district court in 1990 for killing his daughter, will be executed at the gallows of the jail at 1:30 am.

The President rejected his prayer for clemency after the Additional Sessions Judge of Barisal, Mohammed Abdus Sattar Bhuiyan, pronounced the judgement on 21 November, 1990.

Khaleque Mir, according to the prosecution story, killed his daughter Nasima, an issue of his first wife, on May 26 in 1988 and set ablaze their house at a village in Badripura thana.

On the following day, he filed a case with the local police against some neighbours to harass them as a sequel to land dispute.

He manipulated his second wife to be a witness in the case. But, at one stage, she revealed the truth. Khaleque also confessed his guilt to a magistrate.

6 Bangladeshi sailors stranded in Vietnam for 23 months

KARACHI, July 20: At least six Pakistani and six Bangladeshi sailors are stranded in Vietnam for 23 months as the vessel they are employed on is under arrest under the orders of a court of the Ho-Chi-Minh City, reports UNB.

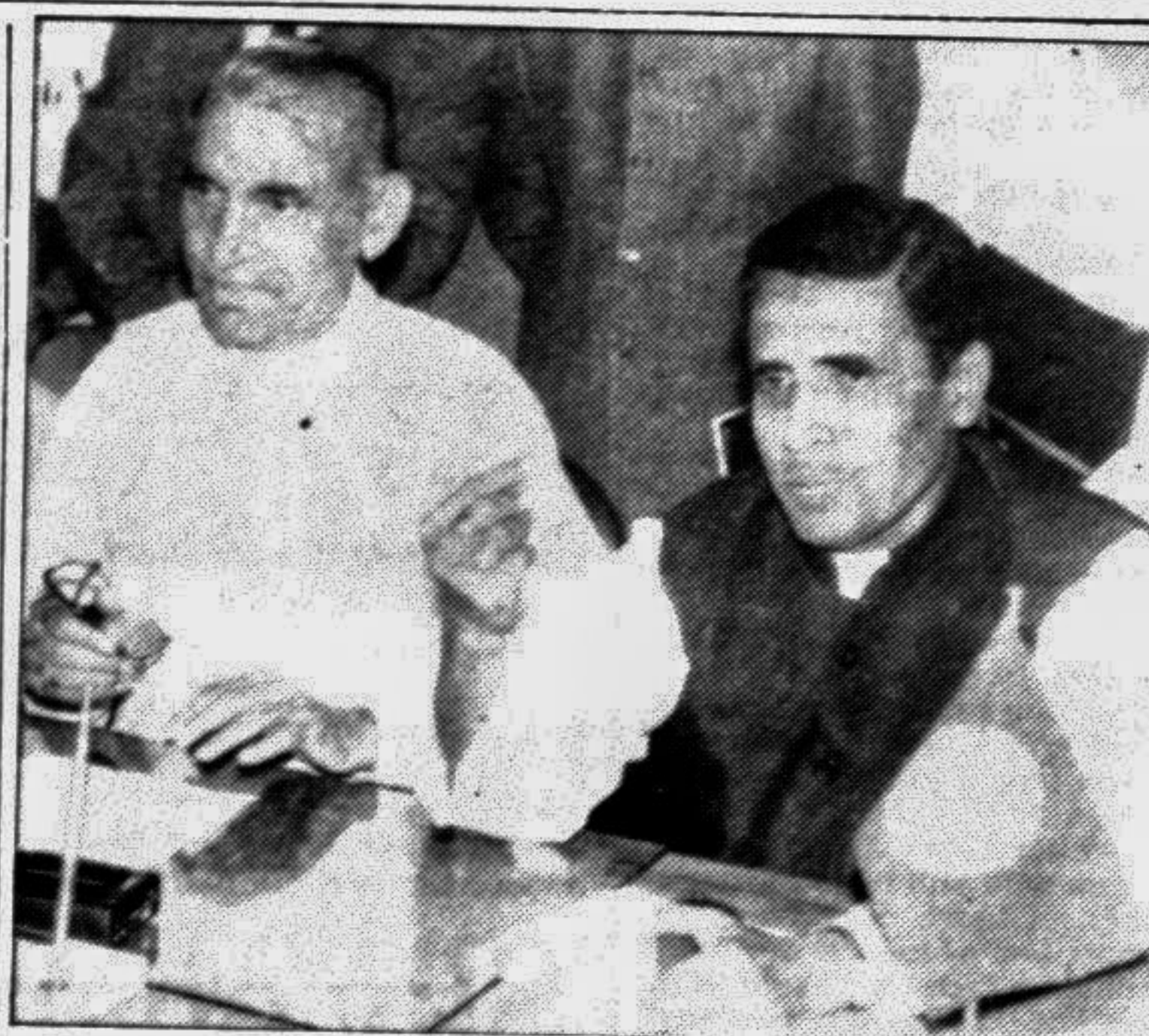
The family members of the Pakistanis in a representation to the Prime Minister of Pakistan have appealed to take up the case with the Vietnamese government for their immediate repatriation.

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He said it was necessary to build the complex firstly because the ministers needed security. Secondly, the cost of accommodating them was so high that the money spent on one minister's accommodation for five years was equivalent to the cost of building a decent house.



Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak and his Indian counterpart Sis Ram Ola at the joint press conference in the city yesterday. — Star photo

JRC meet ends

From page 1

ter accord can be identified and steps for their removal suggested before the onset of the next dry season, beginning from January next year.

Pressed by newsmen about the shortfall of water, the Indian Water Resources Minister said, "There was a shortage of water for a ten-day period. It was for technical reasons that we could not give (the stipulated) quantum. I think in future it will not happen."

The Joint Rivers Commission welcomed the proposal of Bangladesh to implement the proposed Ganges Barrage project. India, the joint commission stated, indicated its intention to consider providing technical assistance through Water and Power Consultancy Ltd (WAPCOS), a Government of India undertaking, which, it said, has the requisite expertise in this regard.

Earlier, opening the joint press briefing, Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak said, "both sides have reached a consensus on all issues. We agreed on transparency at all levels."

Razzak who is the current Chairman of the Joint Rivers Commission said, "We will implement the water sharing agreement and discuss the sharing of other rivers. If any problem arises regarding (Ganges treaty) it will be jointly monitored and resolved in the interest of implementation of the treaty."

Indian minister leaves for Delhi

Indian Water Resources Minister Sis Ram Ola left Dhaka yesterday evening for New Delhi, reports BSS.

Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak saw the Indian minister off at the Zia International Airport.

Irrigation and Water Resources Secretary Dr A T M Shamsul Huda and Indian high commissioner to Bangladesh Deb Mukerjee were present at the airport.

Compensation for families of each garments workers killed in fire

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association and concerned factory owners will give Tk 50,000 in compensation to families of each of the workers killed in a fire, reports UNB.

A press release of BGMEA said the association President, Mostafa Golam Quddus, today (Sunday) visited the gutted factories at Mirpur and made the announcement to the workers.

The BGMEA President said if necessary, the association would pay off the dues of all the workers of Rahman and Rahman, the worst-affected factory.

Rohingyas

From page 1

dent that the Myanmar authorities had accepted to accept 6,809 refugees having 'clearance' till August 15.

The Myanmar authorities had unilaterally stalled the repatriation process on May 1. Following successful negotiations between the governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar, the process resumed.

There are about 21,625 Rohingya refugees at Nayapara and Kutapalong camps here.

Housing complex

From page 1

"The Chief Engineer has had talks with the Public Works minister and the three sites were discussed, said an official of the PWD.

He said it was necessary to build the complex firstly because the ministers needed security. Secondly, the cost of accommodating them was so high that the money spent on one minister's accommodation for five years was equivalent to the cost of building a decent house.

Razzak said the two sides agreed to share the water of the river Teesta and a joint committee was constituted to discuss the matter.

Razzak said that the holding of the JRC meeting after a gap of seven years was itself a significant success and a "historic event."

He said an important aspect of the JRC meeting was India's support to Bangladesh's proposal for building the Ganges Barrage.

Razzak said that with India's support for the Ganges Barrage project, the scheme has been further strengthened. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina took the initiative for the project and assurances of support has already been received from Japan, the World Bank and the ADB, he said.

Asked why the Indian Water Resources Minister came at a time when the dry season was over, Sis Ram Ola replied, "I had no opportunity to come earlier. I took office recently."

Sis Ram Ola was given the charge of Water Resources Ministry after I K Gujral took over as Prime Minister. A scheduled meeting of the JRC in early April was cancelled following political change in Delhi.

It was decided at the meeting that the next meeting of the Joint Rivers Commission will be held in New Delhi in November this year. The two sides have agreed to hold JRC meetings once every three months.

Dutch minister in city

Minister for Development Cooperation Jan P Pronk of the Netherlands arrived in the city yesterday on an eight-day visit, reports UNB.

"The main objective of the visit is to determine future course of cooperation of his country to Bangladesh development programmes, Pronk told newsmen at Zia International Airport.

The Netherlands, one of the important donors to Bangladesh, has been providing financial assistance to its various welfare sectors including health, rural development, poverty alleviation, flood protection, river training and water resources.

Describing his trip as a "working visit", the Dutch Minister said he would discuss with the Bangladesh leaders expansion of trade and other important development activities which are receiving his country's aid on priority basis.

Pronk went on saying that he would seize the opportunity to take up issues of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) since Bangladesh is the coordinator of those nations.

Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria, who received the Dutch Minister at the airport, described him as a "great friend of developing countries, particularly of the LDCs."

Pronk earlier visited Bangladesh in 1991.

Replying to a question on possibility of Dutch investment in Bangladesh, the minister said the government of the two countries could make a link in this respect.

Indo-Pak rematch

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be in the running for a finalist berth.

Pakistan have picked up two points from their match against the Bangladeshis whom they beat by 109 runs, and Pakistan lost to Sri Lanka in the qualifying round. (Details on page 10).

Lack of training

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tries including garments factories.

The authorities concerned are now planning to amend the Fire Service Ordinance, giving special focus on fire safety measures in garments factories, it was learnt from other sources.

According to available statistics, nine persons were killed in Mirpur last week, 11 in Pallabi in June, 1996, nine in Ibrahimpur in 1995, and 32 in Mirpur in 1990 in incidents of fire in garments factories.