

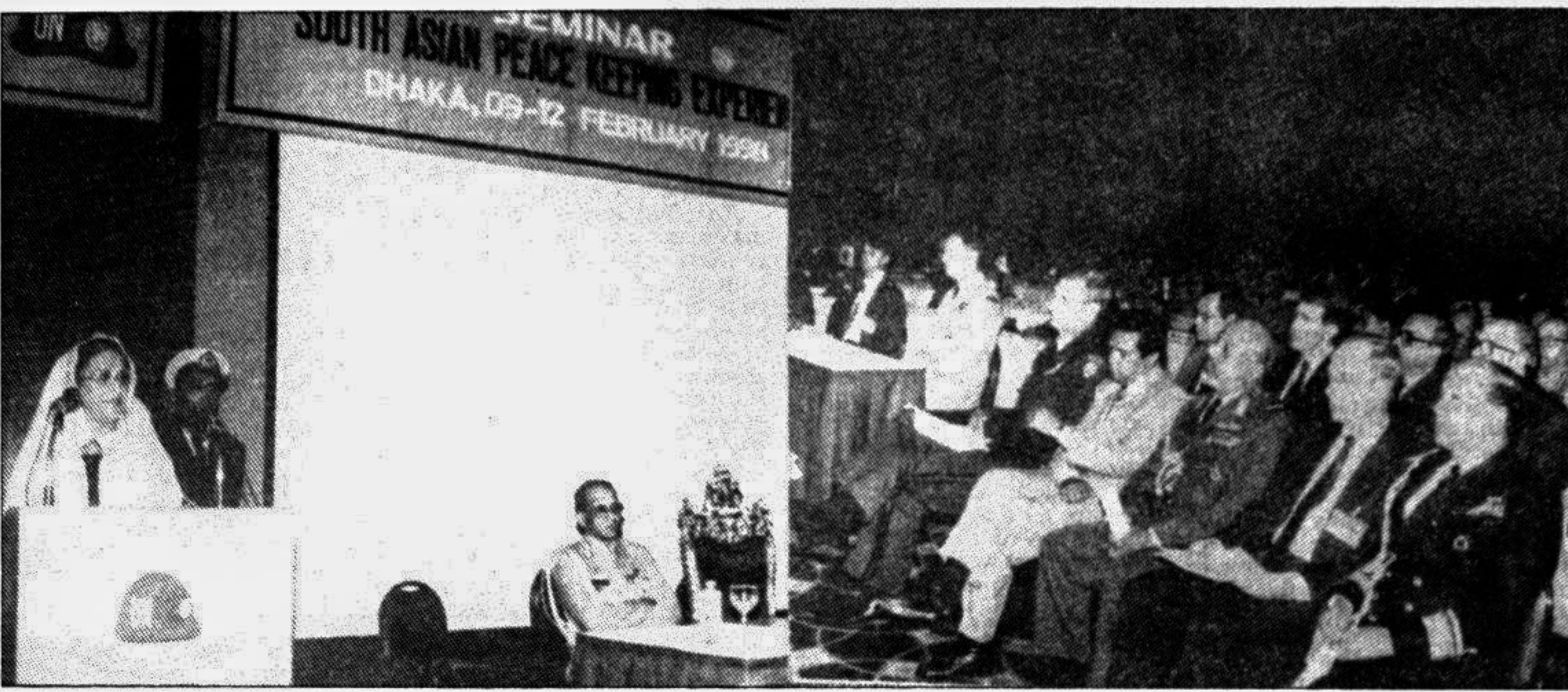
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The World On Time



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina speaking at the inaugural session of a seminar on 'South Asian Peacekeeping Experience' in the city yesterday.

Setting up of peacekeeping training instt proposed

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday proposed the establishment of an institute in the city for imparting training to the peace-keepers, reports UNB.

"I humbly propose that we should initiate all the practical steps in establishing a well and effectively financed institution for training in peace-keeping," she said while inaugurating a seminar at a local hotel in the morning.

The four-day seminar on "South Asian Peacekeeping Experience" was organised by the Bangladesh Army with the support of the US Army Pacific Command (USARPAC).

Hasina said the South Asian countries should soon develop a full-fledged peace-keeping training institute in order to train the peace-keepers.

"Such an institute will be able to help us in preparing and maintaining a body of peace-

keepers who will remain readily available to meet future demands."

Seeking combined efforts and concrete steps to materialise the project, Hasina also sought adequate support from the United Nations in establishing such an institute in Bangladesh.

Giving a brief resume of the post-cold war era, she said the changed situation has brought most of the South Asian countries to the forefront in peacekeeping operation and collectively and individually they have rich experience in this regard.

The Prime Minister said Bangladesh had the first opportunity to participate in a peacekeeping operation by sending her troops in 1988 to supervise the ceasefire between Iran and Iraq. Since then, she has been sending her best officers, troops and equipment to UN peace-

keeping operations.

She mentioned that within a period of nine years, the excellent performance of Bangladesh peace-keepers and quick response of the government to the requests made by UN has made her a major contributor in this regard and this has been recognised by the authorities concerned.

Besides Bangladesh, delegates from four other SAARC countries — India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka — as well as the United Nations are participating in the seminar.

Representatives from 11 other troop contributing countries — Canada, China, Indonesia, Japan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, UK and USA — are taking part as observers.

Chief of Army Staff Lt General Muhammad Mostafizur Rahman delivered the opening address.

8 textile mills to be handed over to workers, JS told

The government has decided in principle to hand over to workers eight textile mills which are incurring losses, State Minister for Textiles AKM Jahangir Hossain told Parliament yesterday, reports UNB.

Replying to a question of Shajahan Khan (AL), he however, said terms and condition of privatising these mills are yet to be finalised.

The State Minister said 48 textile mills, out of total 83, have been privatised till 1995-96. Another five mills remain laid off. He said of the 30 mills run by the BTMC, workers of 11 mills were retrenched under the voluntary retirement programme.

Mannan Bhuiyan

Bhuiyan said BNP wants peace in the CHT within the constitutional framework and safeguarding the interests of tribal and non-tribal people in the region.

The BNP secretary general said, "A silent famine is sweeping the country as the price of essentials, particularly the rice, have gone up."

Bhuiyan called upon the people to make today's hartal in the Chittagong division and demonstration elsewhere in the country a success.

BNP and its allies called the programmes demanding cancellation of the CHT agreement.

Presided over by Mahbul Alam, the meeting was addressed, among others, by Shamsuzzaman Dudu, Adv Shamsul Bari Mia Mohon, Alamgir Kabir, Majibur Rahman and Mohammad Borhanuddin.

Unclaimed rice

From page 1

ties collected samples of the rice, now being stored in the godowns at Majirhat and Port Colony.

Unloading of the rice continued through lightening and it may take three more days to complete it. The unloading started as per the court order to store the consignment and not to sell it, the official informed.

The ship, after visiting some ports in other countries, is now at the outer anchorage of Chittagong port.

But it could not be known whether the rice was at all fit for human consumption as the ship moved around different ports for a long time, the customs official said.

The official said the ship is owned by an influential businessman having close link with the ruling party.

Australian FM

From page 1

success of last year's 'Year of South Asia', in which the Australian government placed special emphasis on improving relations with Bangladesh and other countries of the region.

Bangladesh is the largest recipient of Australia's development aid in South Asia. The total aid budget in 1997-98 for Bangladesh is 33.3 million Australian dollars, large parts of which are for food security through food aid programmes.

Downer will hold official talks with his Bangladesh counterpart Abdus Samad Azad later in the day today. Dhaka will insist on increasing exports to Canberra to bridge the trade gap. Both sides are expected to emphasise on greater bilateral economic cooperation and investment.

The current two-way trade is 300 million Australian dollars, 80 per cent of which comprises of exports by Australia. Bangladesh imports milk, dairy products, steel, some minerals and cattle feeds from Canberra each year. Dhaka's exports comprises of garments, sea food and junk goods.

Pankajini

From page 1

said.

Priti Kumar Chakma, accompanied by some of his supporters, may stay back there, the sources added.

Priti Kumar Chakma, the rival of Shantu Larma, was passing an idle life at Agartala, freezing his insurgency activities as most of the members of his faction numbering over 200 surrendered en masse in 1985 at Rangamati Hill District.

In June last year, Priti Kumar aided by Babatosh Dewan Giri formed a rival organisation named New Chittagong Hill Tract Council, to throw a challenge to the PCJSS headed by Shantu Larma, reports received from across the border said.

Babatosh Dewan was a stalwart of PCJSS, but he was sacked for his alleged involvement in defalcation of funds, the sources said.

Meanwhile, a source said Shantu Larma reportedly held a meeting with Priti Kumar at Agartala on February 5 to reach a consensus. But the outcome of the meeting could not be known.

Housewife found hanging from ceiling fan

By Staff Correspondent

A housewife was found dead in her house at north Manik Nagar under Shabubagh thana in the city Sunday night.

Police said neighbours found Rina Khatun, 22, wife of Akhter Hossain, hanging from a ceiling fan hook at her residence at about 8 pm.

Police and her husband said Rina committed suicide, but Akkel Ali, father of the dead, claimed his daughter was murdered.

Hospital sources, quoting the relatives of the victim, said Akhter, a grocer, married Rina about three years ago with Tk 20 lakh dowry. Rina went to her father's home at Gazaria thana in Munshiganj a few days ago as Akhter often tortured her.

Parents of Rina convinced her and later sent her back to husband's house on Friday.

On Sunday night one of the neighbours found her hanging and informed police. Police sent the body to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Rina's husband lodged an unnatural death case with Shabubagh thana in connection with the incident.

Hasibur Rahman

From page 1

tion," he said.

In a statement, Swapan said that after assuming power, the present government has established a government of consensus.

Different national problems are being discussed in Parliament and the opposition was given chance to discuss in the House whatever they had wanted, he said.

"I feel the people are being deprived following abstention from Parliament," he added.

About the various demands of BNP, Swapan said the present government has conceded to most of the demands. "I think a solution can be found by raising rest of the demands in Parliament."

He said most of the BNP MPs want to return to Parliament and want to discuss the problems of their areas and ensure national development. But these lawmakers could not go back to the House because of conspiracy by certain vested quarters, he alleged.

He said General Ziaur Rahman was a freedom fighter, but the party he had founded is now "controlled by a handful of people" like Anwar Zahid, Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury and Moudud Ahmed that cannot be accepted.

Seasonal fluctuations

From page 1

he said.

Finance Secretary Akbar Ali Khan, apparently embarrassed that the reports quoted unidentified senior finance ministry officials, explained it as "seasonal fluctuations."

The media reports reflected the slide in output in October-November in 1997 in comparison with the better production levels in July and August. Tofael Ahmed pointed out that even the lower output gave a picture of considerable growth when compared to that in the corresponding period the previous year. (See table on Business Page).

Kibria also read out portions of World Bank and IMF reports on the state of the Bangladesh economy, especially those on industrial sector.

There is a surprising pick up in overall manufacturing since April and through November 1997. The pick up is led as usual by RMG. Food and beverage products, chemicals and basic metals production were also substantially higher. Construction activity also appears to be continuing as evidenced by inputs and domestic production of cement, iron and steel and residential construction. The minister quoted the WB periodic update for January as saying:

The two ministers also referred to growth in industrial credit since they took over, "results of which are beginning to show up."

"The private sector credit

Arms surrender today

From page 1

The opposing group has put up posters in bills opposing the accord. They plead for total autonomy for the region and expulsion of the settlers from the plains, which had been a prime demand of Larma.

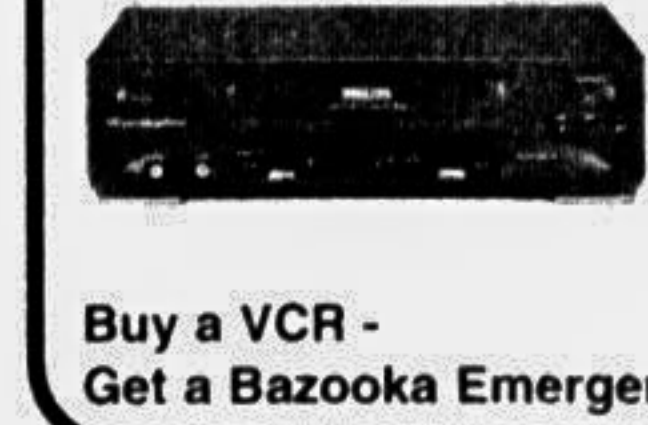
They also accused Larma of deviating from the original demands for total autonomy and expulsion of settlers, who are more than half a million out of a population of 1.1 million in the CHT.

The settlers who had voiced their concern at being dominated by the tribesmen-led Regional Council had also staged demonstrations protesting the accord when it was signed last year.

So far, two persons have been killed in clashes with police and BDR. The settlers fear that they would be ultimately evicted despite assurances by ministers.

They have been kept under vigil by the authorities, some of their leaders have been detained and others on the run, the

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One-third of OMS dealers selected, lottery for the rest soon

By Staff Correspondent

The four-member Open Market Sale (OMS) dealer selection committee of the Food Directorate yesterday finalised appointments of about 30 per cent of the 160 dealers in the city for sale of rice at a government controlled price, sources concerned said.

Food Directorate sources said that in each of those 80 markets of the city two dealers would be appointed who would get 500 kilograms of rice every day to sell at Tk 12.50 per kg.

Forex

From page 1

million US dollars on February 10 from 1672 million dollars on January 8.

Kibria claimed another 500 million dollars held by the banking system would put the figure at 2231 million dollars.

"The reserve is quite capable of taking care of food imports," Kibria said. "If we are required to import five to 10 million tonnes of foodgrains, we will be able to handle that easily."

Tofael Ahmed said rice production scenario was not as bad as being portrayed. There are some places where production suffered and there are places it is better," he said. "This is something artificial."

The finance minister also disagreed with the view that a depreciating taka would create inflationary pressure on the economy because of unforeseen increase in the rice import bill.

Kibria said a liberalised financial regime allowed the commercial banks to "hold certain proportions" of foreign exchange. "In the past, it was much more restrictive," he said.

In Pakistan, according to Kibria, the entire external reserves were held by the central bank. "We are not doing that. And there's no pressure on our taka."

He also claimed the recent reports on inflation were not properly reflecting the situation. As on December 31, 1997, the national inflation rate was 5.1 per cent, he said.

Debate in JS over imprisonment of Akhtaruzzaman

By Staff Correspondent

Jatiya Sangsad yesterday witnessed a brief debate between the ruling Awami League and Jatiya Party MPs over the imprisonment of BNP legislator Major (retd) Akhtaruzzaman.

Akhtaruzzaman was taken to prison on Sunday after a magistrate's court in his home district Kishoreganj had sentenced him to three months of imprisonment. The opposition MF was charged with "instigating violence" at Katiadi Thana on May 1, 1996.

He was, however, granted bail by a district magistrate yesterday morning.

The debate on the issue began immediately after Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury informed the House, under the JS Rules of Procedure, that a member of parliament — Major (retd) Akhtaruzzaman of the Opposition Bench — was taken to jail on Sunday and the magistrate concerned had duly informed the Chair.

The Speaker read out the magistrate's letter in the House which said that the magistrate had sentenced the accused with three months of simple imprisonment following a one year, two months and 25 day trial of the case.

The Speaker also informed the House that he had received another letter from the jailed MP's wife, Salma Zaman, yesterday morning said that Akhtaruzzaman was denied bail by the magistrate, although her husband had told the magistrate that he intended to attend a "parliamentary committee meeting to be held 9:00 am the next day (Monday)."

As soon as the Speaker had finished, Jatiya Party Whip Fazle Rabbi stood on a "point of order" to say that it was unfortunate for all members of the parliament that one of their colleagues had been imprisoned.

"What is more unfortunate is that Major (retd) Akhtaruzzaman, MP, was denied bail by the district magistrate," the JP legislator said. "As a practicing lawyer, I can say that whenever a person is convicted for a period of six months or less than that by a lower court, the accused usually gets bail to appeal in a higher court against the lower court judgement."

Rabbi further argued that it was not even right for the magistrate concerned to proceed with the case that involves an MP, especially when Jatiya Sangsad was in session."

The JP legislator referred to two laws — Pakistan Assembly Members Privileges Act, 1963 and East Pakistan Assembly Members Privileges Act, 1965 — that, according to him, say that no civil or criminal procedure could be drawn against a member of parliament within two weeks from and after a parliament session.

But Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim of Awami League took no time to oppose Rabbi's views. "A magistrate has every right to give any judgement s/he thinks right," Selim argued.

"It is not fair that an MP will go unpunished, if s/he commits a crime," the AL lawmaker said, asserting that the law would take its own course. "According to law, Major Akhter is free to appeal in a higher court against the judgement of the magistrate."

Sheikh Selim also recalled that a former AL legislator, Hemaat Uddin Awrongo, was arrested, and convicted as well, when he was a member of parliament during BNP rule.

"At this point of the debate, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Abdul Matin Khairul took the floor. "I have nothing against the judgement delivered by the magistrate concerned as judiciary presently enjoys complete freedom."

"But the appeal is the continuation of an original case, and usually an accused, if convicted by a lower court for a period of three months, immediately gets bail to appeal in a higher court."

The Law Minister further said that Akhtaruzzaman was not only a parliament member, he was a freedom fighter. "Whatever the case may be, it is the responsibility of all the 330 members of Jatiya Sangsad to uphold the prestige and dignity of any MP, irrespective of his/her political identity."

The debate ended with Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury informing the House that Akhtaruzzaman got bail from a district magistrate court yesterday morning.

JCD, BCL clash in Sirajganj: 20 injured

SIRAJGANJ, Feb 9: A clash on the Sirajganj University College campus between Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and Chhatra League left 20 people injured today, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the clash erupted after former AGS of Sirajganj JCD was beaten up. Police used 11 rounds of teargas shells and one bullet to bring the situation under control.

Four-hour hartal observed in Khulna

KHULNA, Feb 9: A four-hour hartal, called in protest against the killing of a student leader, was observed in the city today, reports UNB.

All Party Alliance enforced the hartal from 6 am to protest the killing of Alok Kumar Dey, former student leader of BL College and district president of Bangladesh Chhatra Moitra.

Port workers

From page 1

stevedores.

Consequently, the stevedore workers stayed away suspending the container handling work, he said adding that a pro-ruling party labour leader illegally tried to take control of container 'lashing' work.

There are six container ships anchored at the port jetties now, the port sources said.

However, excepting container vessels, work in other ships were continuing as usual.

Meanwhile, port authorities today held a meeting with stevedores and the disputing labour leaders for three hours from 11 am with acting Chairman Captain Zahiruddin Mahmud in the chair.

In the meeting, a decision was taken to resume container handling work on this afternoon, but it could not be started as the disputing workers took control at the jetties where the container ships are anchored, port officials said.

Some disputing workers took possession over the hatch of container ships to stop the workers engaged by the stevedores to enter the vessels, they informed.

Accord signed

From page 1

agreed that an investment friendly climate exists in Bangladesh and investors from Indonesia will feel encouraged to explore the potential areas of their investment.

About the direct airlinks between the two countries, Alatas hoped that it would be done soon.

The Bangladesh Civil Aviation Ministry will visit Indonesia next month to implement the air agreement, he added.

BSS adds: During the talks, Ali Alatas invited Abdus Samad Azad to visit Jakarta.

Alatas requested Azad to lead a business delegation during his visit.

Aman harvest

From page 1

mated at 1.60 million MT for 1997-98 compared to last year's 1.46 million MT.

It also said, "all indications suggest that the Boro area will increase by two to three per cent during the current year". It estimated 7.6 million MT of Boro yield for 1997-98 compared to 7.4 million MT in 1996-97 provided favourable weather persists and fertilizers and other inputs are available.

Based on all these estimates, the report projected the country's total foodgrains production in 1997-98 at 19.57 million MT, 0.77 million MT less than last year's but 0.96 million MT higher than the last ten years' average.



Children rendering a song at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday, the first day of the 11-day cultural programme organised by Sammilito Sangskritik Jote in observance of Amar Ekushey.

Water confce

From page 1

Ramesh Vaidya, member of Nepalese Planning Commission, Dr Norio Yamamoto, managing director of Global Infrastructure Fund Research Foundation, Japan.

Among others who were present were the Indian Ambassador to Nepal, the Nepalese Ambassador to India.

Participants in the conference will discuss in three groups on how to use the river water.

The Bangladesh delegates will also discuss issues on the Ganges Barrage — the present status and perspective for its implementation.

Foreign Secy

From page 1

decide whether Col Farooq is a self-confessed killer, or an accused murderer or innocent.

By making the comment, the Foreign Secretary has ignored the authority of this court and thus he is liable for contempt of court the lawyers submitted.

The lawyer said the statement of the Foreign Secretary has affected his client Farooq Rahman and also the impartiality of a fair trial of the case.

District and Session Judge Kazi Golam Rasul assured Advocate Khan Saifur Rahman that he would look into the matter.

Bangabandhu murder

From page 1

later, Khan said, Gen Shafiqullah rang him and asked to see him at 46 Brigade Headquarters.

Khan recalled that he found a sort of chaotic situation in the brigade headquarters. Some officers and soldiers, in a very aggressive mood, were in Gen Shafiqullah's office. "Shafiqullah was sitting beside a desk and was not in control of the situation," he said.

The witness said he found an army officer shouting most and giving directions to various people. The officer was Dalim, Col Rashid.

He said Dalim then informed all those present that Khandaker Mushtaq Ahmed has asked the chiefs of the armed forces to go to the radio station.

Shafiqullah was soon taken out by those armed soldiers and he got on his official jeep to follow the army chief who was being escorted by the armed troops. A jeep with some forces was also behind his jeep, Khan said.

The former navy chief said in radio station he saw a few civilians and some army personnel and Khandaker Mushtaq standing near the announcement booth.

"I then saw Shafiqullah entering the announcement booth with a piece of paper and reading out the allegiance."

Shafiqullah, Khan said, handed over the script to him and later to the Air Chief for announcing over the radio. From radio station they all drove to Bangabhaban where he found a lot of army officers not known to him.

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Arsenic

From page 1

speaking as special guest, said some fifty million dollars are being made available to tackle the problem.

Moreover, UNDP is also undertaking a pile of programmes. "To understand the problem, UK is undertaking research work on it," he said.

Landell Mills said, first of all, the contaminated tubewells have to be identified. Then, the people have to be alerted. "Then we will have to help the people find an alternative water supply," he said.

"To do so is a massive undertaking. We hope, by the middle of the current year, the problem will get addressed," he said.

The World Bank local chief said, "Money is not a problem, the problem lies in organising." He said he sometimes wondered why the private sector, particularly pharmaceutical companies, did not develop a system to test water in a cost effective way.

"We are in a situation where people tend to panic. The alarming thing is people are leaving the habit of drinking ground water and turning to surface water."

"Surface water is highly contaminated. Many more people will die by drinking surface water. We have to be careful," said Mills.

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