

BNP expels Alauddin from party

By Staff Correspondent
BNP yesterday expelled Dr Alauddin from the party on disciplinary grounds.

A BNP press release issued last night said: "An emergency meeting of the party's National Standing Committee, held at 6:00 in the evening, decided to expel the BNP Member of Parliament Dr Mohammad Alauddin on charge of violating party discipline."

Dr Alauddin yesterday took oath as State Minister for Water Resources.

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Clinton praises CHT accord

President Bill Clinton has welcomed the peace accord between Bangladesh government and the people of Chittagong Hill Tracts, according to a message received from Washington last night, reports BSS.

In a letter of felicitation to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on February 11, the US President said, "I read with particular interest that your government has concluded a peace accord with the people of Chittagong Hill Tracts. Please accept my congratulations at ending this unfortunate and long-running conflict."

Recalling Hasina's invitation to visit Bangladesh, Clinton said he would consider visiting Bangladesh seriously. He said, "Current plans call for us to visit South Asia later this year. As our plans develop, am-"

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Formation of Nat'l Wage, Productivity Commission okayed

The Cabinet yesterday approved in principle the proposal on formation of the National Wage and Productivity Commission '98, reports UNB.

The approval was given at a meeting of the Cabinet with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

The meeting also endorsed the draft bill to amend the Bangladesh University Grants Commission Ordinance 1973.

BNP rally in city today

BNP will hold a rally at the city's Ramna Batamool at 3.30 pm today, protesting the price hike of essentials and demanding cancellation of the CHT peace accord, reports UNB.

Party central leaders will address the rally and join a procession to be brought out by the city BNP.

BNP will also hold rallies and bring out processions across the country Thursday to press the demands, said a party press release yesterday.

Meanwhile, BNP thana and ward units brought out processions in the city in support of their today's rally and demonstration protesting the price hike of essentials and demand-

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Chairman of Petroleum Corp resigns

Star Report

Chairman of the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation Fazlul Huq has resigned before the termination of his extended tenure of service.

He left the office without handing over the charge on Sunday, BPC sources said. No successor had been appointed until yesterday. The reason for Huq's resignation was not immediately known. He was not available for comment.

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Another BNP MP takes oath as state minister



President Shahabuddin Ahmed administering oath to newly appointed State Minister for Water Resources Dr Md Alauddin at the Bangabhaban yesterday. — PID photo

By Staff Correspondent

Dr Mohammad Alauddin, a BNP lawmaker from the Rajshahi-5 constituency of Jatiya Sangsad, was inducted into the Council of Ministers yesterday evening.

Dr Alauddin, who once accused the Awami League of being a power-monger, has been made State Minister for Water Resources.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed administered the oath to the new minister at Bangabhaban, with the Prime Minister and some of her senior cabinet colleagues present on the occasion.

Alauddin is the second BNP legislator joining the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Hasibur Rahman Swapan took oath, as Deputy Minister for Industries on February 9 last. He was also present in the swearing in ceremony of Dr Alauddin.

Dr Alauddin was a veteran Awami League leader until he joined the BNP on May 7, 1996. A former Presidium member of the AL, he abandoned the party

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Donors' seminar on Ganges barrage from Mar 8: PM

By Staff Correspondent

Dhaka will host a three-day international seminar on the construction of proposed Ganges barrage and proper utilisation of the Ganges waters from March 8 this year, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

The seminar will be organised by the Water Resources Ministry in cooperation with Japan, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank, she said during her question hour in the House.

Representatives and experts from the development partners will attend the seminar, the Prime Minister said in reply to a question by Jalaluddin Talukdar of the ruling Awami League.

The government had already received positive responses from Japan, the Netherlands, Italy, England, China, India, World Bank, Asian Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank for the construction of the proposed barrage, she told the House.

Replying to another question by Talukdar, Sheikh Hasina informed the House that different donor agencies had expressed their willingness to help develop the Chittagong Hill Tracts after signing of the peace agreement. The World Bank and other development partners have assured to extend financial assistance, she elaborated.

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Speaker censures former Speaker

By Staff Correspondent

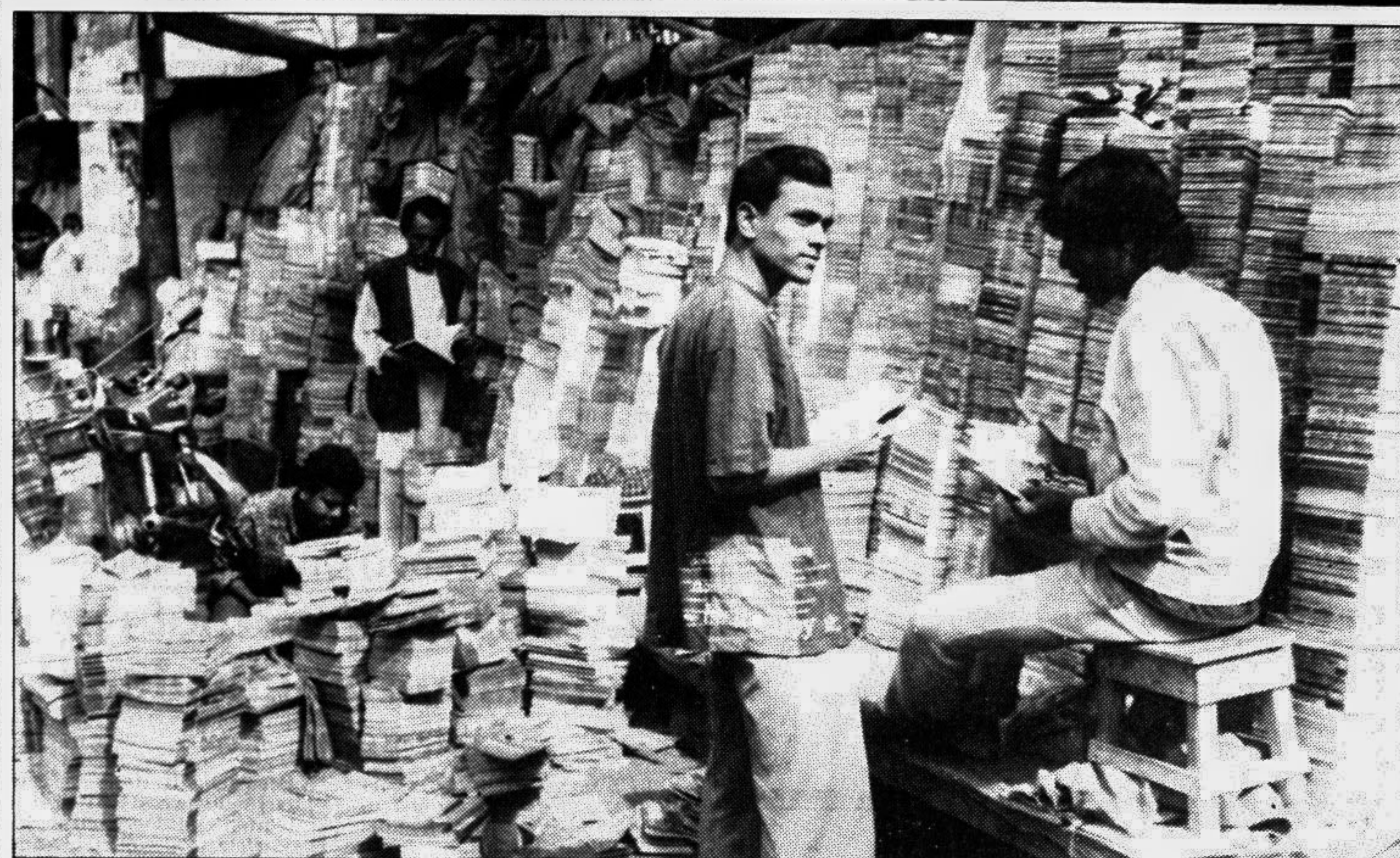
Speaker Humayun Rashid Choudhury has censured his predecessor Shaikh Razzak Ali who, he said, has questioned his knowledge of Constitution.

"There are many Constitution experts other than Mr Razzak. But none of them reacted the way he did," the Speaker said. He criticized the former Speaker for his sharp reaction on an issue without contacting him.

Razzak Ali had earlier blasted the Speaker for his comments about legal measures on the alleged floor-crossing by BNP lawmaker Hasibur Rahman Swapan, who has joined the government as a deputy minister.

"Razzak Shaheb is not Speaker now, he is a BNP member,"

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Book sellers occupy footpaths at Banglabazar in the city.

— Star photo

32 evidences of Aug 15 killing submitted to court

Thirty-two evidences of the August 15 tragedy were deposited to the court during trial proceedings of Bangabandhu murder case in the city yesterday, reports UNB.

The bloodstained and bullet-riddled objects were brought to the special *glash* of Dhaka District and Sessions Judge court from Bangabandhu's house-turned-museum at Dhanmondi. Curator of the Bangabandhu Museum Syed Siddiqur Rahman brought the evidences in a big trunk and submitted those to the court.

Siddiqur, the 53rd prosecution witness in the case, was introduced before the court of Judge Kazi Golam Rasul by special PP advocate Ramjan Ali Khan.

The evidences included clothes of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Begum Mujib and their children, including Russel. Those were bloodstained and riddled with bullets fired by some disgruntled army officers on August 15, 1975.

The evidences also included books and photographs kept at the reading room of Bangabandhu on the ground floor. Those were torn by brush fire. A bullet was found stuck to a book "Shradhanjali".

Investigation officer of the case seized the evidences on October 3, 1996 from Bangabandhu's Dhanmondi residence. Those were later kept in the museum.

Siddiqur Rahman told the court that he was an SDO in

Khulna during the assassination of Bangabandhu in 1975. He said he is able to identify the evidences as former leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina briefed him when he took over as curator on August 14, 1994.

Among the evidences were a *lungi*, a white *punjabi* and spectacles used by Bangabandhu. Both the *lungi* and *punjabi* are bloodstained and bullet-riddled.

The evidences also included a red-bordered white saree, a blouse, a handkerchief and a petticoat of Begum Fazilatunnesa.

The witness deposited a bloodstained sky-colour tiny shirt saying that it was of Sheikh Russel, the youngest son

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US House panel okays anti-child labour bill

WASHINGTON, Feb. 17: A panel of the House of Representatives advanced legislation on February 12 that would block US assistance — except for humanitarian aid — to countries that fail to eliminate child labour, reports USIS.

The measure, approved by voice vote in the House International Relations Sub-committee on International Operations and Human Rights, would increase the US contribution to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) project on child labour to 30 million US dollars per fiscal year.

Under the provisions of the bill, the US Labour Secretary would issue annual reports identifying countries that do not prohibit child labour or that do not effectively enforce their child labour laws. Those

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Meeting over joint exploration in Block-9 ends without progress

Star Report

A meeting of the high-powered government investment committee over partnership of three foreign oil companies — Tullow, Chevron and Texaco — for oil and gas exploration in Block 9 ended inconclusively yesterday, a senior official of the Energy Ministry said.

The meeting, chaired by the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, was supposed to draw a conclusion over the modalities of partnership between the three companies in this block and provide guidelines to the negotiation committee.

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Meterised taxi cab service in the metropolis soon

By Mizan Ali

Meterised Taxi Cab Service (MTCS) having centrally controlled radio-telephone facilities will be introduced in the Dhaka Metropolitan area shortly as a pilot project allowing a maximum of 2000 such vehicles to operate in the city, official sources said yesterday.

Fare for the airconditioned MTCS has been fixed at Tk 20 for the first two km, Tk eight for each km next and Tk two for a quarter km or less, according to a guideline prepared by the Bangladesh Road and Transport

Authority (BRTA) recently. For the 'economic' MTCS, a fare of Tk 15 has been fixed for the first two km to be followed by Tk 6 for each next km and Tk 1.50 for a quarter of a km or less.

The radio-telephone facilities could be used by any passenger paying Tk 10 for each call.

Any private or public company having a paid up capital of Tk 10 lakh along with tax payer identification number will be eligible to import vehicles to be

used for taxi cab service, the guideline added.

Each company will have to provide round-the-clock service.

The government waived duty on import of vehicles to be used as MTCS. The taxi cabs having aircondition facilities will be of yellow colour and the economic ones will be of sky blue colour.

Each taxi cab should have the fare card with the rate fixed by the government and it will be binding on the driver to show it

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Workers loot jute goods for arrear wages

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Feb. 17: The unruly workers and employees of the state-owned Sonali Jute Mills on Monday looted 400 bales of export quality gunny bags from its godown and sold it for Tk 14 lakh in the local market.

The workers led by CBA leaders carried the gunny bags in 10 trucks keeping the Manager (Production), Abdul Hakim, confined under lock and key in his office.

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Shahbazpur gasfield PSC with Unocal uncertain

By Sharier Khan

The signing of the production sharing contract (PSC) between US company Unocal and the government over the Shahbazpur gasfield has become uncertain due to a number of legal complexities, sources said.

On the other hand, the government has become free from any obligation about signing the PSC with the US company as the Letter of Intent (LOI), under which Unocal initiated the PSC in mid-1997, has expired on January 20 last.

In January 1997, the government violated its own policy by holding unsolicited negotiations with Unocal and later signing a LOI with that company allowing it to explore the Shahbazpur gasfield. This move had triggered sharp reaction from other foreign exploration companies. The government later openly apologised for its 'mistake'.

The government last week held a meeting regarding Unocal.

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Biman's latest Captains sick, crew fail to turn up

By Special Correspondent

Three out of seven available captains of Airbus aircraft of Bangladesh Biman reported sick and others were not available for various reasons, cancelling one and delaying another flight of the airline on Monday.

Some passengers staged protests when the Singapore-bound flight was cancelled but Civil Aviation Authority sources said there had been no damage to the airport. No case was filed, they said.

The Singapore-bound flight was cancelled as all the crew were not available, and the flight to Calcutta was also delayed when the crew could not reach the airport, stuck in the traffic gridlock due to the Biswa

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Main accused of raping minor girl arrested

By Staff Correspondent

Police yesterday arrested the main accused of raping a nine-year-old girl in the city's Kawranbazaar area Thursday night.

Tejgaon police held Nantu from a slum in Kawranbazaar area at about 1 pm. With this, three of the four accused in the case have so far been arrested. Murad, the other accused who was still in hiding, is a slum dweller in Kawranbazaar area.

A gang of four men, aged in their 20s, raped the young girl when she was returning to her house at about 8 pm on Thursday.

Hossain and Jewel who were arrested following the incident

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Jatiya Kabita Parishad brought out a procession in the city yesterday.

— Star photo

Visiting ADB official says Speed up aid utilisation for approval of new projects

By Staff Correspondent

A visiting Asian Development Bank (ADB) official yesterday said the government needs to improve its aid utilisation capacity for absorbing newer projects.

"We had talks with the government over the issue of aid utilisation. It will be difficult to approve new projects if utilisation of ADP fund is not good," said Geert Van Der Linden, Director, Programmes Department (West) of ADB, at a press conference at its Dhaka office yesterday.

Van Der Linden is heading a

team here to see the ADB's loan programme in Bangladesh.

He said utilisation of ADB's loans dropped from an average 300 million US dollars to less than 200 million dollars last year ending December, 1997.

"This has to be improved to the previous level for approval of new projects," said Van Der Linden who had been ADB's Dhaka mission chief for three years since 1992. Last year ADB approved 400 million dollars in loans for Bangladesh. He said five new projects worth 280 million dollars are in the

pipeline for 1998.

Talking about the economy, he said the ADB is encouraged by 'positive signs' in the economy with a rise in export and industrial output, strong remittance flow and restrained fiscal deficit.

However, he said there are also areas of concern like the current state of low foreign exchange reserve.

Van Der Linden said there is a positive sign that the private sector is showing interest in the energy sector and added that

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'Poetry to remain a weapon to fight injustice'

By DU Correspondent

The 12th National Poetry Festival organised by the National Poetry Council began in the city yesterday with the slogan "Poetry for Peace and Solidarity".

Poet Abul Hossain inaugurated the two-day festival at the TSC road-island in the morning.

Poet Sufia Kamal was scheduled to inaugurate the festival but she could not attend due to health reasons.

A message from Sufia Kamal was read out at the inaugural function, chaired by president of the National Poetry Council Rafique Azad.

Speakers at the opening ses-

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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

National Board of Revenue

Segunbagicha, Dhaka

Sub: Regarding Assistance Cell for Issue of VAT Registration Certificate of the National Board of Revenue.

It is notified for information of the esteemed individuals & firms interested to obtain VAT registration that VAT Registration Certificate is issued from the respective VAT Department Office. To help make issue of the certificate easier and quicker, a "Registration Cell" has been opened at Room No 327 of the National Board of Revenue. In case you face any inconvenience or harassment in obtaining VAT Registration Certificate from field level VAT offices, you are requested to contact the above-mentioned Registration Cell of the National Board of Revenue with written specific complaint. In view of expediting the registration, all kinds of cooperation are extended to the esteemed taxpayers from this Cell.

The undermentioned officer may be contacted for any explanation or information in this regard. Please collect the required form from any VAT Department Office. If necessary, the form will be available also from the undermentioned Cell. All concerned have been instructed to help in filling the form.

Contact address:

Second Secretary (VAT)
Registration Cell, Room No 327
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Phone: 838101-8 232
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DFP-2973-12/2
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