

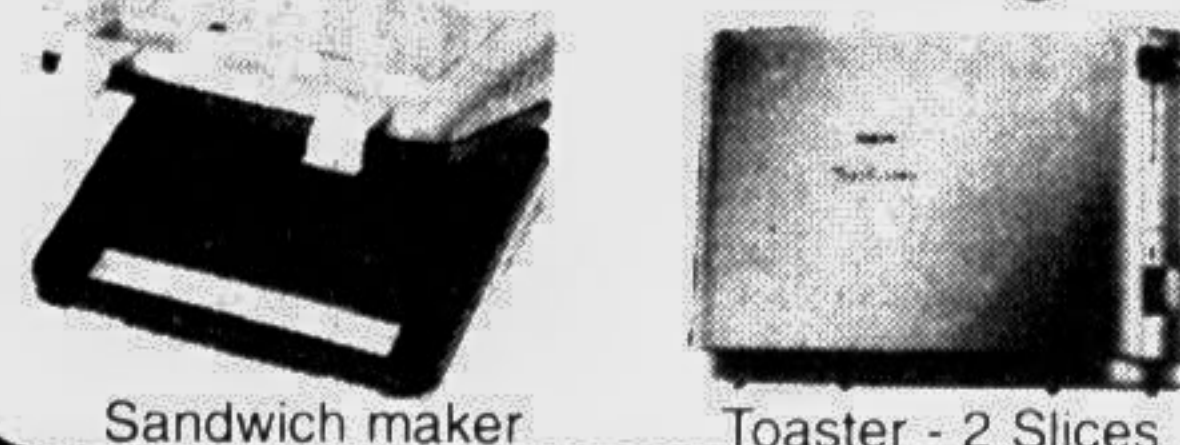
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Let's make things better PHILIPS

10 trafficked boys finally return home

By Rafiq Hasan

Maqbul has forgotten his mother tongue. He now speaks Hindi. When he was asked his name, he responded promptly. "Mera nam Maqbul, ghar (house) Bangladesh, Malibagh Bazar." He said his father's name is Tozammel. Maqbul was among ten children who were brought back from Delhi yesterday evening. They had been taken there to be sent to Dubai for use as camel jockeys. The children arrived by a British Airways flight. They have all forgotten Bangla and now speak Hindi like Maqbul. They could say their father's name and the names of their villages but Advocate Salma Ali of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) which took the initiative to bring them back said, "We can not rely on their statements because they had been trained months ago by the child traffickers." The child traffickers kept them with some men and women to familiarise them before sending to Dubai or any other Arabian country for use as camel jockey" Salma said.

The children were arrested by Delhi police in September last year along with a group of 27 men and women on suspicion of child trafficking. The children were kept in a state run children's home named Prayas Observation Home in Delhi. The men and women were sent to jail. The BNWLA could recover 10 out of total 16 children arrested at that time. The rest six children remained with their fake mothers. After the news was published in newspapers, Advocate Salma Ali, Executive Director of Bangladesh Jatiya Mahila Ainjibi Samity took the initiative to bring them back with the help of STOP — a non-governmental organisation in Delhi which works for stopping trafficking and oppression of children in India.

Roma Debabarhata, convener of STOP also came with the group. Talking to The Daily Star she said that they could release them after tremendous efforts by her organisation and the Bangladesh High Commission in Delhi. "It took almost two months to get a permission

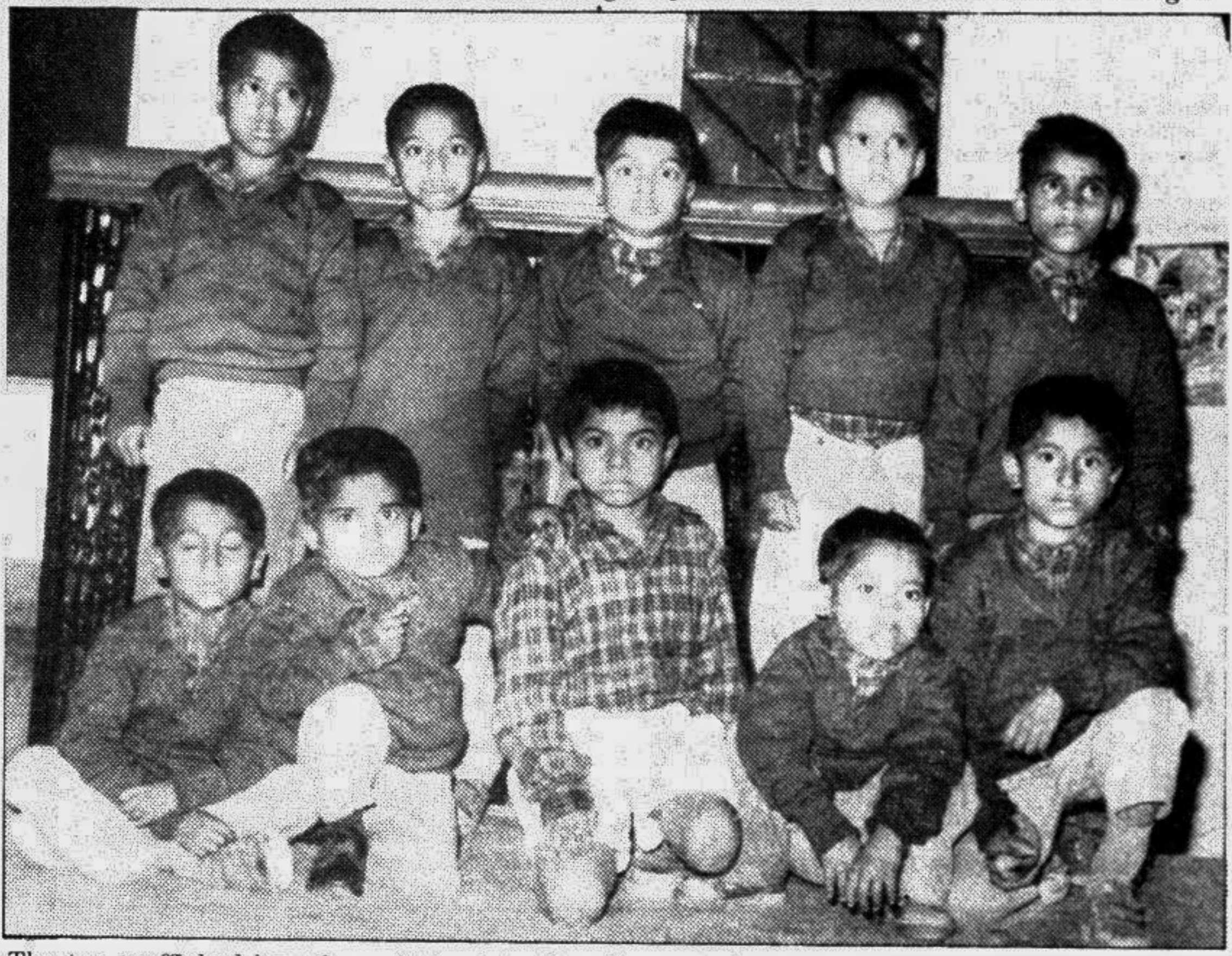
from the court to meet the children and identify that they were from Bangladesh." "When I first met them, they could speak some Bangla. But they later forgot their language," Roma said. Salma Ali said the children will be kept at a private children's home at Gazipur before handing them over to their parents.

The BNWLA also brought back a woman named Rehana Parveen (18) along with a three month old child.

Parveen told this correspondent that her husband, Abdul Latif, took her to Delhi and sold her to a trafficker.

Parveen hailed from Pangsha village under Faridpur district. She was married to Latif of Nababganj, Dhaka, two years back.

She came back after spending one and a half years in Tihar Jail. Roma took the initiative to release her at the request of Salma Ali. By this time, Parveen gave birth to a girl. The little girl, Sadia Sultana Turin, was in the lap of Parveen when she talked to this correspondent at the BNWLA office last night.



The ten trafficked boys brought back to the city yesterday. —Star photo

Alauddin, Hasibur join JS

From page 1 cal standard in politics." Hasibur and Alauddin who were elected to parliament on BNP tickets in the last general elections were made Deputy Minister and State Minister by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on February 9 and 17 respectively. They have been expelled by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, the main opposition in parliament which has been boycotting the Sangsad sessions since August 30 last year. Dr Alauddin and Hasibur entered the House, escorted by Awami League whips Abdus Shahid and Mujibur Huq, at 12:25 pm. The ministers have been allotted new seats in the second last row of the Sangsad floor. As soon as the newly-appointed ministers entered the House, Deputy Leader of the House Zillur Rahman, who is also the General Secretary of the ruling Awami League and Minister for Local Governments and Rural Development (LGRD), took the floor to welcome them. "I welcome the BNP legislators who have joined the government of national consensus, responding to the call of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina," Zillur said, claiming that the consent of the government of national consensus, introduced by the Prime Minister, has already been appreciated at home and abroad. The AL and JP members greeted the new ministers by thumping their desks. Later, JP Whip Fazle Rabbi took the floor, on a point of order, to draw the attention of the Chair on the seats allotted to the newly appointed ministers. "I welcome the BNP legislators for joining the government of national consensus and hope that the newly appointed ministers would utilise their talents for the welfare of the people." Questioning the 'ethical standard' involved in appointing members from an opposition party, the JP Whip, however, said: "Appointing ministers from other parties would not create a good precedence. There should be a minimum ethical standard in politics, and when it comes to a traditional political party like the Awami League, it is only expected that it would show a higher level of ethical standard." He called upon "all concerned" to maintain minimum ethical standard in politics. "The JP legislators said that the BNP members who have defected the party and taken oath as ministers may not lose their Sangsad membership on technical interpretation of the constitutional provision concerned. But in my view, the precedent here at least slightly affected Article 70 of the Constitution."

Fazle Rabbi then expressed surprise over the location of the seats allotted to the new ministers, said: "They should have been given seats along with other members of the council of ministers." He also criticised BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan for his recent remark on Hasibur Rahman that Hasibur "was a third class MP of the BNP."

Housewife

From page 1

step-mother. The step-mother, reportedly a former police constable, wanted the girl to marry another man, a youngster of the locality. The woman and her husband used to reside with her step-mother at Merul Badda since they got married about five years back. But her husband, a member of the Ansar force, was often threatened by a gang of local hoodlums. Recently, the gang forced the husband to leave the area. The woman was also beaten up while in confinement, DMCH sources said. However, Gulshan police said they did not receive any complaint in connection with the incident till last night.

British diplomat's body flown to London

By Staff Correspondent

The body of British Diplomat Dr Richard Moorehead was flown to London by a British Airways flight last night. The coffin was accompanied by his wife, Susanna Moorehead, and their two children, officials sources said. Dr Moorehead, 46, a first secretary of British High Commission in Dhaka, was found dead in his city's Gulshan residence on Monday morning. Police suspected that the diplomat committed suicide. Meanwhile, the high commission arranged a private memorial service for Dr Moorehead at the garden of British High Commission yesterday afternoon. Members of the British Embassy Council and British aided NGOs attended the service. Dr Moorehead joined as social development advisor at the Aid Management Office in Dhaka in February last year.

Repatriation of tribal refugees resumes today

From Our Correspondent

KHAGRACHHARI, Feb 18: Repatriation of tribal refugees from Tripura state of India will resume tomorrow, through Tabachhari border point. A total of 194 families are scheduled to return home tomorrow from Takumbari refugee camp. The repatriation process will continue for the next seven days and 7486 refugees of 1279 families are scheduled to return home from Takumbari refugee camp through the same border point. In the six phases of repatriation earlier, 29057 refugees of 5358 families returned home.

ALPP

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BNP lawmaker Dr Alauddin, who took oath as state minister for water resources just two days back, also told journalists yesterday that one or two more were "in the process". High prices of rice, law and order situation and the on-going process of arms surrender by Shantibahinimam may also come up for discussion, sources said.

CHT accord JP lawmakers blame govt for bypassing JS

By Staff Correspondent

Treasury Bench lawmakers yesterday praised the government for signing the peace accord putting an end to insurrection in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) while a Jatiya Party MP blamed it for 'bypassing the parliament in major decision-making process.' Three ruling party MPs and one from JP yesterday took part in discussion on the thanksgiving motion on presidential address in the House. They are Abdul Kader Siddiqi, A B M Abdul Kashem and Haji Selim of Awami League and Noor Mohammad Mondal of Jatiya Party.

Kader Siddiqi was full of appreciation for the CHT peace accord. He thanked Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for not responding to a proposal for holding roundtable meeting on the peace accord. This would have meant ignoring the Jatiya Sangsad.

He lauded creation of a tribal affairs ministry proposed in the CHT accord and suggested creation of a ministry for freedom fighters. Referring to the Tk 50,000 cash awarded for each member of Shantibahini on surrender of arms, the ruling party lawmaker said that such cash awards could also be considered for freedom fighters. Kader Siddiqi also demanded obituary reference on 72 freedom fighters who embraced martyrdom by protesting the killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975.

He was critical of BNP politics saying that "to protest dismantling of a bridge, BNP calls hartal but it does not go for movement when rice prices go up." Two other AL lawmakers also praised the government for the peace accord. They congratulated the President for covering every aspect of development in the country in his address.

JP member Noor Md Mondal, however, held the government responsible for making the parliament ineffective and said, "the government takes all decisions on its own bypassing the Jatiya Sangsad." In this regard, he referred to the Ganges water treaty, CHT peace accord and gave a few other examples.

Kibria tells JS Guidelines to restrict trade union activities in banks soon

Finance Minister Shah A M

S Kibria yesterday said in Parliament that the government is formulating guidelines to restrict trade union activities in banks, reports UNB. Replying to Abdul Latif Mirza (AL-Sirajganj) during the question hour, he said a number of measures have already been taken to improve the banking system as well as the overall bank management.

The Finance Minister said the proposed self-employment bank will start functioning soon to give loans to the unemployed youths in income-generating projects. In reply to a supplementary question, he said the Bangladesh Commerce Bank Ltd (former BCI Ltd) is likely to operate from this month. The Managing Board of the bank has been formed with Prof Abdul Mannan Chowdhury of Dhaka University as Chairman.

In reply to another question, Kibria said more than 100 money changers' licences were issued and the number would go up. He, however, said the money changers will not be allowed to do banking functions.

Minor girl rape case Main accused records confessional statement at CMM's court

By DMC Correspondent

The main accused in the rape case of a nine-year-old girl in the city's Kawranbazar area Thursday night recorded a confessional statement at the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court yesterday. Begum Zia, who is also leader of the Opposition in Parliament, visited Saudi Arabia as the royal guest of King Fahd Bin Abdul Aziz. During her week-long visit, she performed Umrah at Makkah and offered feteah at the Rawja Mubarak of Prophet Hazrat Mohammad (SM) in Medina. Before returning home, she was undergoing post-operative medical check-up at the King Faysal Specialised Hospital in Riyadh, says a party press release. On arrival at the airport, Begum Zia will be accorded a reception by BNP leaders and workers.

BNPPP

From page 1

national Airport at 10 am on Friday. The meeting of BNP parliamentary party has been convened at 8:30 pm the same day. Deputy leader of the opposition in parliament Dr A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury has questioned all the party MPs to attend the meeting at the opposition's conference room in the Sangsad Bhawan. Begum Zia, who is also leader of the Opposition in Parliament, visited Saudi Arabia as the royal guest of King Fahd Bin Abdul Aziz. During her week-long visit, she performed Umrah at Makkah and offered feteah at the Rawja Mubarak of Prophet Hazrat Mohammad (SM) in Medina. Before returning home, she was undergoing post-operative medical check-up at the King Faysal Specialised Hospital in Riyadh, says a party press release. On arrival at the airport, Begum Zia will be accorded a reception by BNP leaders and workers.

Effectiveness of women and child oppression law and the activities of Registration Department also came up for discussion. Committee member Law, Justice and Parliament Affairs Minister Abdul Matin Khasru, Advocate Rahmat Ali, Advocate Shah Alam, Barrister Rabia Bhuiyan and Sheikh Nurul Haque attended the meeting.



BNP brought out a procession in the city yesterday demanding cancellation of the CHT accord and protesting the price hike of essentials. —Star photo

Strong navy must to protect maritime boundary: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government has taken steps for the development of armed forces along with socio-economic development of the country, reports UNB.

"We have taken steps for the expansion, development and modernisation of the Navy like the Army and Air Force," she said while addressing a function marking the commissioning of BNS Madhumati at Sadarghat BWTA jetty in the morning. BNS Madhumati, a maritime surveillance and coastal patrol craft of Bangladesh Navy, has been named after river Madhumati which flows near Tungipara in Gopalganj district. This coastal patrol craft, built in the Republic of Korea, will be used for training, anti-smuggling and anti-piracy operation, and protection of fish resources as well as oil and gas rigs in the Bay of Bengal.

The Prime Minister said necessary formalities to procure a frigate for the Bangladesh Navy has been completed. The frigate will be added to the naval fleet soon. "We are sincerely trying to buy maritime patrol aircraft and helicopter for the Navy," she said, adding that the process is underway for procuring modern equipment and vessels for the navy to increase its activities. She said some other development projects for navy are under active consideration of the government. "We are trying to strengthen our navy despite the resource constraint."

Hasina said the navy has an important responsibility in utilising the sea for the economic development of a developing country like Bangladesh. She said apart from the fish resources, the Bay of Bengal has a good reserve of gas and there are prospects of oil and other mineral resources in the Bay. Also, there is a good opportunity for effectively using the maritime routes for communication and transportation in the situation of world trade, the Prime Minister said. "So, a strong, modern and skilled navy is indispensable to ensure the security of our maritime boundary and to conserve and collect the resources of exclusive economic zone (EEZ)."

Later, the Prime Minister handed over the Commissioning officer of BNS Madhumati, Commander Mohammad M A Talukder. It was followed by hoisting of the commissioning pendant, BN colour and the Prime Minister's standard atop the mast of the ship.

Kibria: Inflation rate

From page 1

of the current fiscal year (July-December 1997) stood at Tk 855.31 crore compared to Tk 1134.65 crore during the same period previous year. In a written reply Kibria informed Master Mujibur Rahman (AL-Shariatpur) that 1,42,567 people have submitted the income tax return under the self-assessment system during the current fiscal year. The minister replied in the affirmative when asked if legal action was taken against owners of house and car and those having a minimum annual income of Tk 60,000, but not submitting the income tax return. He said the field level revenue officials have been collecting information from the municipalities and BRTA about the owners of house and car and have taxable income. On the basis of such information, the individuals were being requested to submit their income tax return. Notices were also being served upon the defaulters under the income tax rules. Replying to another question, Kibria said the Government has asked the banks concerned to take all steps, including legal action, against loan defaulters. The Finance Minister said task forces have been set up in

all commercial banks to realise the overdue loans and restore discipline in the loan disbursement system. A high powered task force headed by a Deputy Governor of Bangladesh Bank has been formed to monitor the activities of the banks, he said.

JMB

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Construction firms from Iran and South Korea signed the contracts at a function held in the Sarak Bhaban. Chief Engineer of the department of Roads and Highways signed the contracts on behalf of the government. Iran's Stratus Construction Company got the contract-one which involves construction of road from Joydevpur to Kalkakoir. South Korean firm Sungjee Construction Co Ltd will construct Kaliakoir-Koratia and Kaliakoir-Tangal roads under contract-two and contract-three respectively. Four bypass roads will be constructed at Kaliakoir, Mirzapur, Koratia and Tangal towns and 72 bridges and culverts will be reconstructed.

Meanwhile, construction works for the 77 km-long approach roads are going on under four contracts with a total expenditure of Tk 391 crore. Asian Development Bank is providing fund for the roads—Mirpur-Savar, Nabinagar-Chandra, Demra-Daudkandi and Barayirhat-Wahedpur. The contract signing ceremony was attended, by Communications Minister Anwar Hossain, Iranian Ambassador to Bangladesh Mohammad Sadegh Fayyaz, First Secretary of Korean Embassy Lee Tae Ho, Chief Representative of OECF Takeo Matsuzawa and Project Director of Bangabandhu Bridge Approach Project J B Barua.

JS body formed

From page 1

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Silent famine prevailing, says Mannan Bhuiyan

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday called on the people to wage a vigorous movement against the government as it failed to scale down the price of essentials and rescind the CHT accord, reports UNB.

"A silent famine is prevailing in the country as a large number of people are virtually passing the days without food," he said addressing a rally at the city's Ramna Batamool. The city unit of BNP organised the rally protesting the price hike of essentials and cancellation of the CHT peace accord. Presided over by Sadek Hossain Khoka, the rally was also addressed by Dr Khandakar Mosharrar Hossain, Mirza Abbas, Amanullah Aman, Haris Chowdhury, Barrister Abul Hasnat and Rezabuddin Chowdhury.

The BNP secretary general accused the government of reneging its election pledges to ensure food for common man at fair price. "Rice is now being sold at between Tk 15 and 22 per kg while its price was Tk 8 to 10 during the BNP regime." Bhuiyan urged the government to open gruel kitchens across the country soon and introduce open market sale (OMS) at union level to save the people from hunger. He also called for allotting one lakh metric ton of rice through OMS for each union and refixing the OMS price of rice at Tk 10 per kg. Later, a procession was brought out in the city that terminated at the Mouchak crossing after parading the streets in Topkhana, Purana Paltan and Kakrail areas.

Regarding dismissal of Dalim from army, Col (ret'd) Ansar said: An unwanted incident occurred in Dhaka centring on wife of Dalim. After the incident, he lost his job in a disciplinary action. But, the witness said, after his dismissal, Dalim came to 1st Field Artillery regiment in Comilla and addressed the troops. "I was on duty in Chandpur at that time," he added. The witness also informed the court that Captain Bazul Huda was transferred to Dhaka at the age end of 1974. He said a sepoy of his unit was also killed and another injured during the bloody operation led by Mohiuddin, Noor and Huda at Bangabandhu's residence. The witness was later cross-examined by state defence counsels for absconding accused. He will be questioned further by the lawyers for arrested accused when the court will resume at 9:30 am on February 23.

AL activist shot in city

By DMC Correspondent

An Awami League leader of Pallabi thana was shot by unidentified assailants at Mirpur in the city yesterday. Hossain Sarker, 45, joint secretary of Pallabi thana unit of AL, received bullet in his right leg. He was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) in the afternoon. Police said they had heard about the incident but could not give any details in this regard. Hospital sources said a gang of five in a car attacked Hossain when he was passing the bus stand at Mirpur-11 in a rickshaw at about 4 pm. The gang tried to drag Hossain from the rickshaw. At one stage the attackers fired on him after they failed to get hold of the AL leader.

At the DMCH, Hossain's brother alleged that the attackers were the activists of Jubo Dal. They earlier threatened the life of Hossain. However, the reason behind the attack could not be known immediately. Replying to another question, Alauddin, a former president member of the Awami League who had joined the BNP immediately before the last parliamentary polls, said: "The question of returning to the AL does not arise, as I was expelled from the party." He, however, told newsmen that some of his friends in the AL had proposed to him to join the government. Explaining reasons behind joining the government, violating the party decision, Dr Alauddin said: "I just want to work with the government to do some development works for the people of my constituency." Asked whether there was any difficulty to do the development works as an opposition MP, he said: "There had so far been no development work in my constituency through myself."

Reconciliation between rival JCD groups at DU

Jatiyatadabi Chhatra Dai

yesterday reached an understanding with its aggrieved leaders and workers who were abstaining from the party activities creating an uneasy situation on the Dhaka University campus, reports UNB. The troubled ensued when the central leaders expelled Zakir and Mamun, leaders of the rival faction, for their alleged involvement in assaulting its central leaders few days back. The reconciliation between the JCD central leaders and the rival group came at a meeting held at Ziaur Rahman Hall in the afternoon. JCD President Shaheed Ud-din Chowdhury Annie, general secretary Habib-un-Nabi Sohel and other leaders were present.

BNP standing body meet Unethical politics of AL has crossed limit of decency

BNP at its standing committee meeting yesterday lambasted the government for its 'politics of trading' and described its recent activities as anti-democratic, reports UNB.

"The worst game of politics cannot bring any good for democracy and the future politics of the country," the meeting resolved. It observed that the present unethical politics of the ruling party has crossed the limit of decency and it set a worst example of political perversion. Held at 29 Minto road, the meeting was presided over by Deputy Leader of the Opposition in parliament Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury. Taking stock of the country's latest political situation, the meeting said the government has exposed its autocratic and fascist character by resorting to unethical activities. "The meeting also called upon the people to remain alert about the hypocritical behaviour of some BNP leaders and traitors, and build up a strong resistance against them. It accused the government of not taking any initiative to assuage the sufferings of the people caused by price hike of rice and other essentials. The meeting expressed concern over the gradual deterioration of law and order situation and said 'Awami terrorists' have unleashed a reign of terror throughout the country. The BNP standing committee meeting thanked the people for making its recent agitation programmes a success and urged them to be prepared for a vigorous movement. Party Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, M Saifur Rahman, Oli Ahmed, Dr R A Gani, Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Dr Khandakar Mosharrar Hossain, Chowdhury Tanvir Ahmed Siddiquy, Barrister Moudud Ahmed, K M Obaidur Rahman and Khandkar Mahub Uddin Ahmed attended the meeting.

Bangabandhu

From page 1

Field Artillery when he became CO of the unit. Major Bazul Huda was its adjutant while Huda's brother-in-law Major Abdul Aziz Pasha was CO of the 3 Field Artillery. The PW alleged that Major Dalim in the name of arms recovery at that time raided the houses of a number of political leaders and activists, held and harassed them. "Dalim and Huda jointly chalked out the plan of operation and selected troops for it." Regarding dismissal of Dalim from army, Col (ret'd) Ansar said: An unwanted incident occurred in Dhaka centring on wife of Dalim. After the incident, he lost his job in a disciplinary action. But, the witness said, after his dismissal, Dalim came to 1st Field Artillery regiment in Comilla and addressed the troops. "I was on duty in Chandpur at that time," he added. The witness also informed the court that Captain Bazul Huda was transferred to Dhaka at the age end of 1974. He said a sepoy of his unit was also killed and another injured during the bloody operation led by Mohiuddin, Noor and Huda at Bangabandhu's residence. The witness was later cross-examined by state defence counsels for absconding accused. He will be questioned further by the lawyers for arrested accused when the court will resume at 9:30 am on February 23.

Consensus govt

From page 1

House violating the party decision. Hasibur expressed his ignorance. Replying to another question, Alauddin, a former president member of the Awami League who had joined the BNP immediately before the last parliamentary polls, said: "The question of returning to the AL does not arise, as I was expelled from the party." He, however, told newsmen that some of his friends in the AL had proposed to him to join the government. Explaining reasons behind joining the government, violating the party decision, Dr Alauddin said: "I just want to work with the government to do some development works for the people of my constituency." Asked whether there was any difficulty to do the development works as an opposition MP, he said: "There had so far been no development work in my constituency through myself."