

Last batch of
tribal refugees
returns home
today

From Our Correspondent
KHAGRACHHARI, Feb 26:
The 12-year-old refugee problem
between Bangladesh and India comes to an end when the
last batch of 198 tribal people
return home from exile in
Tripura tomorrow.

The refugees are scheduled to
cross the border at Tabalchhari,
walking across the makeshift wooden bridge on the
Feni river, separating the two
countries, administration
sources said.

Their arrival will mark the
end of the repatriation of the
refugees who fled their homes in
Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

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**Asaduzzaman
MP to appeal
against election
tribunal verdict**

By Staff Correspondent
Awami League MP from
Tangail Khandakar Asaduzzaman
has said he will appeal to
the higher court against the
verdict of an election tribunal
canceling his election as a
member of the Jatiya Sangsad.

The Dhaka Division Election
Tribunal gave the verdict on Wednesday in the case filed by Asaduzzaman's BNP rival in
the 1996 general elections, Abdus Salam Pintu, challenging the election results in the Tangail-2 JS seat.

Talking to The Daily Star
yesterday, Asaduzzaman said
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AL-BNP dialogue today to end JS stand-off

By Nazmul Ashraf

Speaker Humayun Rashid
Choudhury has invited the
ruling Awami League and the main
opposition BNP to a meeting at
his Sangsad Bhawan office at 2
pm today.

Both the AL and the BNP
have confirmed receiving the
Speaker's telephonic invitation,
extended yesterday.

The crucial meeting, to be
held over lunch, has been con-
vened to resolve the long-stand-
ing crisis over BNP's boycott of
the parliament proceedings for
the last six months, sources in
both the camps said.

Each of the parties would be
represented at the meeting by a
team of five members.

BNP Secretary General Abd-
ul Mannan Bhuiyan told The
Daily Star last night that his
party would be represented by
Chief Whip of the Opposition in
Parliament Khandakar Delwar
Hossain, M Saifur Rahman, Col
(retd) Oli Ahmed, MK Anwar
and he himself.

Asked to comment on the
Speaker's initiative, Mannan
Bhuiyan said: "We'll attend the
meeting ... Let's see what happens
then."

Telecommunications Minister
Mohammad Nasim also

confirmed that his party would
be represented in the meeting
with similar number of dele-
gates. Talking to The Daily Star
last night, he said Chief Whip
Abul Hasnat Abdullah would
finalise the names of the AL
delegation in consultation with
Prime Minister and party chief
Sheikh Hasina before going to
the meeting.

Nasim, who admitted receiving
telephonic call from the
Speaker on the matter, said he
would be included in the AL
team.

The minister, whose several
attempts recently failed to
bring BNP back to the House,
said: "I'm happy that the BNP
has agreed to sit for dialogue."

The Speaker's move for a
negotiated settlement of the
parliamentary stand-off is being
seen as very significant against
the changed political situation
when the BNP is facing pressure
from amongst its party legislators
for ending the indefinite
abstention from the House.

The Speaker also mediated a
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Transfer of experts & lack of funds cripple BAPEX

By Sharier Khan

BAPEX, the oil and gas ex-
ploration unit of the govern-
ment, is facing severe crisis as
the authorities have trans-
ferred 27 of its expert level offi-
cials on deputation to work in
the Petroleum Concessions Di-
vision (PCD) of Petrobangla.

This has crippled BAPEX but
has brought back life to the PCD
— the Petrobangla wing which
monitors the activities of for-
eign oil and gas companies in
Bangladesh.

Sources said that the sudden
vacuum in the BAPEX, coupled
with absence of exploration
funds for years, and lack of in-
terest of the authorities in
awarding any block or finding
any good "carried over" part-

nership for it in the second
round block bidding have cre-
ated an impression among offi-
cials of BAPEX and Petrobangla
that it would gradually be shut
down.

The transferred officials in-
clude managers, deputy managers
and assistant managers. Qualifica-
tion-wise, they include 10 geolo-
gists, seven geo-physicists and
10 drilling engineers.

"It's true that the PCD badly
needed manpower. It had 13 offi-
cials when there was a need for
at least 60 to carry out its
tasks. So instead of hiring offi-
cials from BAPEX, there should
have been fresh recruitment,"
said one source. "By emptying
See Page 12 Col 1

City to have 4000
more Premium
buses soon

Some 4,000 more premium
buses will be pressed into ser-
vice on different routes in the
capital soon to ensure comfort-
able transportation system,
ease traffic jam and protect en-
vironment, reports UNB.

The project involving about
Tk 850 crore has been under-
taken by Dhaka Urban Trans-
port Project funded by the
World Bank. Rajuk will all allot
lands for the depots of new
buses.

This was disclosed at a high-
powered meeting of the service-
oriented organisations held at the
LORD Ministry yesterday with
LGRD and cooperatives minister
Zillur Rahman in the chair.

The meeting directed the
authorities concerned to take up
immediate measures to to
launch a drive against unau-
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Khaleda protests
filing of 'false
cases' against
JCD leaders

BNP Chairperson Begum
Khaleda Zia has condemned
and protested the filing of a
"false case" against the JCD
leaders, reports UNB.

In a statement yesterday, Begum
Zia blamed the "terrorists and
hired goons" of the ruling party
for vandalism at the Central
Shaheed Minar on February 21 and
demanded immediate withdrawal of the
"false case".

The opposition leader also
accused the "subservient and
inept" government of realising
its conspiratorial designs one
after another in a bid to save it-
self from people's hatred and
cover up its failure to run the
country.

Describing the Shaheed Mi-
nar as a sacred place and symbol
of national spirit, she charged
the government with creating a chaotic
situation in the Shaheed Minar to tarnish
the image of BNP.

"The country's indepen-
dence, sovereignty, integrity
and even sacred places are not safe
under this government", she
remarked.

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PM's fresh call to BNP

Raise all problems in parliament

SARIKANDI (Bogra), Feb
26: Prime Minister Sheikh
Hasina today renewed her call
to opposition BNP to return to
parliament and raise all the
problems in the House, reports
UNB.

"Join parliament and work
for overall development of the
country and welfare of the nation... that's what the people
want from you," she said.

Addressing a huge public
meeting at Sariakandi Degree
College ground in the after-
noon, she said it is unfortunate
that those elected to raise the
people's problems are not going
to parliament.

She claimed that the opposi-
tion was allowed to speak on
every issue and their demands
were accepted. "Why then they
are staying away from the
House?"

Turning to the economic is-
sues, the Prime Minister said
the government has taken all
possible steps for economic de-
velopment of the country.

The government is trying to
ensure a better life for the peo-
ple by fulfilling their basic
needs, she said, calling upon all to
work for the rapid progress of
the country.

Hasina said the government
has a plan to develop a better
communication network across
the country, mentioning that
the Bangabandhu bridge over
the river Jamuna will be opened
to traffic by next June.

On completion of the bridge,
massive economic activities
would start in the northern re-
gion, she added.

The government is also
working to remove illiteracy
from the country within the
shortest possible time and is
planning to reach electricity to
every village, she said.

About the local problems,
the Prime Minister said the
government has taken steps to
solve those.

Mentioning the river bank
protection project Hasina said
it will be completed by next
November, and added that the
government would take more
programmes to save the people

See Page 12 Col 3

Stay of HC order
rejecting writ
against Chetia's
extradition refused

The Appellate Division of
the Supreme Court yesterday re-
fused to give an ad-interim stay
order against the rejection or-
der of Anup Chetia's writ peti-
tion by the High Court, reports
UNB.

Chamber Judge of Appellate
Division Justice Abdur Rouf
refused to grant the ad-interim
stay and ordered to place the
provisional stay petition before
the full bench of the Appellate
Division on Wednesday.

Justice Rouf gave the direc-
tive while he was approached
for a provisional stay order
against the operation of the
High Court order on the writ of

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Rowdyism
DU probe body
chief's room
ransacked

By DU Correspondent
Unidentified persons ran-
sacked the office of Prof Sha-
hadat Ali of Zoology depart-
ment of Dhaka University
sometime between Wednesday
evening and yesterday morn-
ing.

Prof Ali, who is heading a
three-member committee now
investigating rowdyism at the
Central Shaheed Minar on Sat-
urday, told The Daily Star last
night he found his office room

See Page 12 Col 3

Kalyan Singh govt wins confidence vote

LUCKNOW, Feb 26: In a boost
for Hindu nationalists, the gov-
ernment in India's largest state
won a confidence vote today,
five days after it was dismissed
by the state governor, reports
AP.

The vote ended political
turmoil in the state of Uttar
Pradesh which saw two
claimants to the title of chief
minister square off in a fight on
the floor of the state legislature.

The Bharatiya Janata Party,
which had been in power five
months when it was abruptly
dismissed Saturday, won con-
firmation of its court-ordered
reinstatement by a vote of 225-16,
allowing Chief Minister Kalyan Singh to reclaim his of-
fice.

The drama in Uttar Pradesh
state came amid a federal par-
liamentary election, in which the
Bharatiya Janata was ex-
pected to emerge as the largest

Muslim marriage
registration act
modified

The government has modi-
fied the rules under the Muslim
Marriages and Divorces
(Registration) Act, 1974, making
the Nikah registrars (kaz) ac-
countable and simplifying the
management system, official
sources told BSS yesterday.

As per the modified rules,
some sub-rules have been in-
troduced relating to the ap-
pointment of nikah registrars,
enhancement of their licence
fee renewable after every three
years on payment and deposit
of fixed annual fees realised
under the rule.

Going to the villages, testing
water and then warning the
people is an enormous job.
Then the people would have to
decide for an alternative source
of drinking water.

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See Page 12 Col 6

New Telephone Numbers of

The Daily Star

(With effect from
25th February, 1998)

Old Numbers	New Numbers
500091	866771
500092	866772
500093	866773
500094	866774

Australian expert tells The Daily Star Experience in arsenic pollution lesson for other countries

By Morshed Ali Khan

Bangladesh's experience in
confronting the arsenic con-
tamination of groundwater has
been a lesson for Australia and
many other countries of the
world.

Gerry Jacobson, Principal
Research Scientist, Geohazards,
Land and Water Resources Division
of the Australian Geological
Survey Organisation said the
arsenic problem had only been
detected recently. In Australia,
so far no test were carried
out to detect arsenic con-