



VOL. VIII NO. 46 REGD. NO. DA 781

The Daily Star

FALGOON 20, 1404 BS.

DHAKA WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 1998

ZILQUAD 4, 1418 HIJRI

12 PAGES : PRICE TAKA 6.00

MARBLE MARBLE MARBLE
WE HAVE HUGE READY STOCK OF
ITALIAN CARRARA, PERLATO SICILIA,
BOTTICINO, INDIAN KESSWARI GREEN,
MALAYSIAN AND PAKISTANI MARBLE
OF DIFFERENT TYPES.
NIRMAN INTERNATIONAL LTD.
199, TEJGAON I/A, DHAKA.
TEL : 605957, 607363 SHOW ROOM : 861985

Dhaka, Tehran to set up jt business council

Bangladesh and Iran yesterday agreed to expand trade and economic relations by undertaking tie-up projects, including setting up of a joint business council, reports UNB.

The council will be set up comprising the apex chambers of the two countries — Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI) and the Iran Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Mines (ICCIM).

The decision came from the third session of the Bangladesh-Iran Joint Economic Commission (JEC) held at the National Economic Council (NEC) auditorium.

The JEC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the agreed minutes of the three-day session.

Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria and Iranian Minister for Jihad-e-Sazandegi Mohammad Saedi Kia initialled the MOU on behalf of their respective

See Page 12 Col 4

Rest 209 members of Shantibahini lay down arms tomorrow

The surrender of arms by the remaining members of Shantibahini will take place at Dudukchhara village in Panchhari thana of Khagrachhari district tomorrow.

Since the process began with the laying down of arms by Shantibahini cadres at Khagrachhari Stadium on February 10, 1724 surrendered in three phases.

A total of 1933 Shantibahini members are scheduled to surrender arms as per the agreement between the government and the Parbatyia Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) signed on December 2.

The rest 209 members of Shantibahini along with some senior PCJSS leaders are surrendering tomorrow, official sources said.

They included Sudhasindhu Khisa, Raktoutpal Chakma, Gautam Chakma, Rupayna Dewan, Tapas Chakma and Madhavi Lata Chakma, leader of women's wing of Shantibahini.

Some battle wounded and elderly cadres are also among the last group which will lay down their arms at a ceremony at a field near their temporary headquarters at Dudukchhara village, near the frontier with Tripura.

After the final surrender, Jyotirindri Bodhipriya Larma

See Page 12 Col 5

Inside Today

Article
Secularism - Anti-secularism Debate in Turkey
Column: The Horizon
This Week
by Arshad-Uz Zaman
Page 4

Focus
Annan's visit to Baghdad leaves US in quandary; and Banking for the poor: NGO intervention
Page 5

Supplement
One page supplement on '17th General Assembly and Leasing Seminar of Asian Leasing Association'
Page 9

BJP, allies short of majority, Cong opens talks with UF

From Pallab Bhattacharya

NEW DELHI, Mar 3: With a hung parliament now a certainty, the race for power set off by India's general election gathered momentum today as major aspirants began scouting for allies to help them touch the magical majority mark of 273 seats.

Out of the 527 seats whose results have been declared so far, Bharatiya Janata Party and its allies have bagged 245, Congress and its allies 166 and Prime Minister I K Gujral's United Front 96 while the remaining have gone to smaller regional outfits and independents.

The political scenario appears to be sharply polarised into BJP on the one hand and Congress and United Front edging closer to each other on the other hand.

BJP's prime ministerial

candidate Atal Behari Vajpayee said he was confident that President K R Narayanan would invite his party first to form government. He claimed BJP would comfortably prove its majority with the help of allies in a trust vote in the Lok Sabha, if required to do so. Vajpayee said the mandate was clearly in favour of BJP and its allies though they fell "trifle short" of absolute majority.

But he must be watching with considerable worry that Congress and United Front, which bitterly opposed each other in the just-concluded elections, were today patching up with the expressed desire of keeping BJP away from power.

The prospects of Congress and United Front cooperating again to thwart BJP brightened today after CPI (M), which till

the other day ruled out any truck with Congress, expressed willingness to support a non-BJP government at the centre. The CPI (M) politburo is meeting here tomorrow with the main agenda of "what can be done to stop BJP."

The CPI (M) General Secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet had a meeting with Congress leaders yesterday. Congress president Sitaram Kesri told reporters today that there was a "greater possibility" of installation of a coalition government led by his party with the support of what he termed "like-minded secular forces."

Ghulam Nabi Azad, another senior Congress leader, said his party was happy about the stand taken by several constituents of the United Front like CPI (M), Janata Dal and Samajwadi

Party that Congress should lead the non-BJP coalition.

The BJP put up a spectacular performance in Congress-ruled Madhya Pradesh. Riding on the anti-incumbency factor, the saffron party secured 30 of the 40 Lok Sabha seats in this key state where the Congress suffered major losses including the defeat of two of its senior leaders Arjun Singh and Vidyacharan Shukla.

The BJP's alliance with regional parties AIADMK, Lok Shakti, Biju Janata Dal and Trinamool Congress brought rich dividends for it in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Orissa and West Bengal respectively. While in Karnataka, BJP emerged the biggest gainer winning maximum seats. It, however, suffered major reverses in Rajasthan

See Page 12 Col 5

BNP to join JS on Sunday

By Nazmul Ashraf and Reaz Ahmad

After the long-awaited Awami League-BNP agreement came into being on Monday, ending the six-month-old parliamentary stand-off caused by BNP's abstention from the House, both the parties are now preparing to translate the fresh pact into reality.

They are also busy accounting 'losses and gains' out of their fresh understanding, the second of its kind in last 13 months, and deciding fresh strategies in the changed political atmosphere.

The BNP has decided to join the current session of the Jatiya Sangsad on Sunday, Party Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told The Daily Star last night. "We will join the current session of Jatiya Sangsad on March 8," he said.

The date has been selected as the party chief, Begum Khaleda

Zia, is now on a three-day tour of three northern districts and the JS session will remain adjourned on March 6-7 for weekly holiday, he said.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim said, "Upon receiving an up-to-date list of BNP leaders allegedly facing political charges, I'll meet the Home Minister and do the needful."

Nasim said he hoped the BNP would come up with their final list very soon so that the March 31 deadline for withdrawal of the charges as envisaged in the agreement, could be met.

On this issue, Mannan Bhuiyan said his party is preparing a fresh list and will submit it to the government.

The agreement also provides for a 15-day period from March

See Page 12 Col 4

Quit cabinet post, Ershad's call to Manju

By Staff Correspondent

Jatiya Party Chairman H M Ershad has urged Communications Minister Anwar Hossain Manju to relinquish his cabinet post.

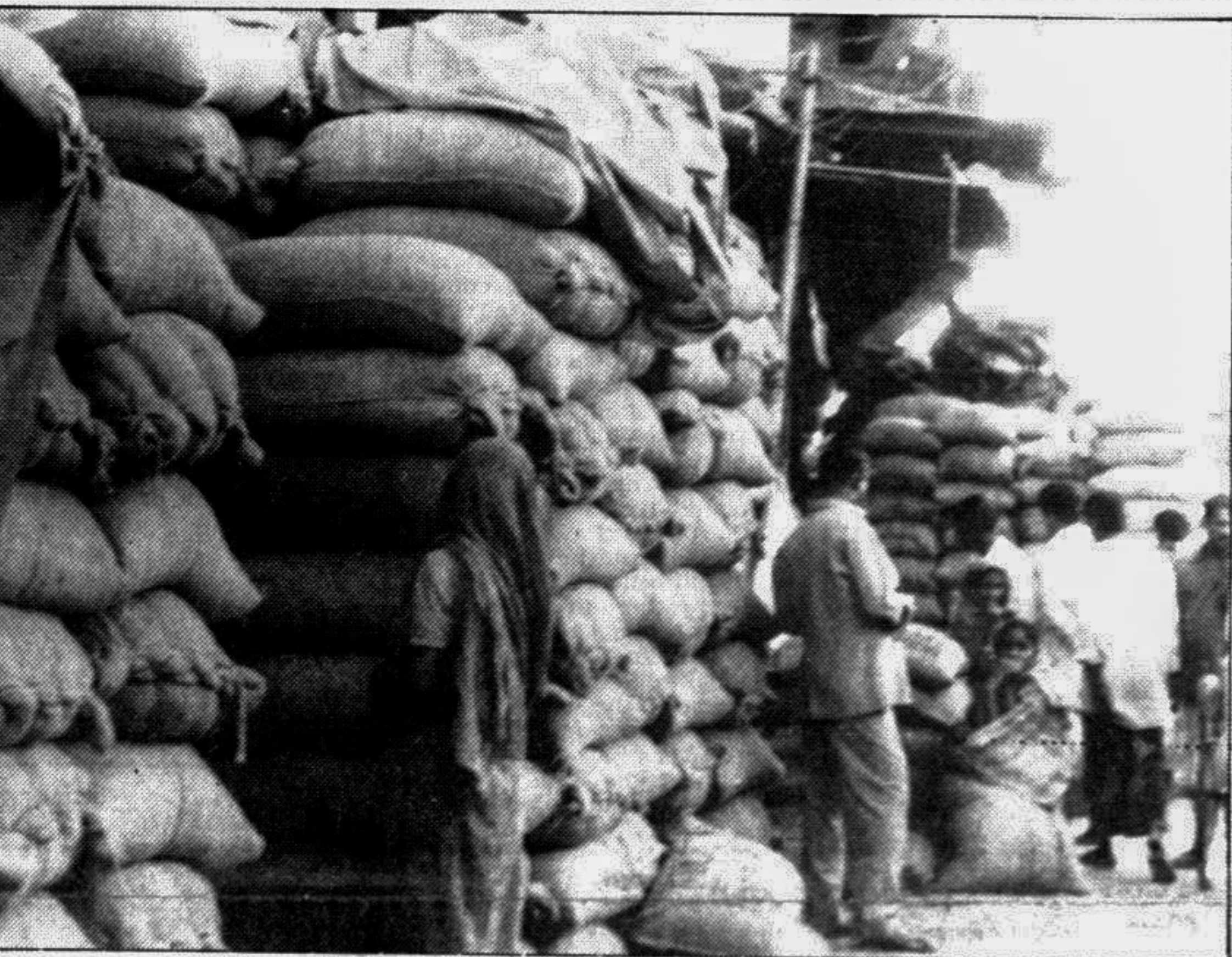
He made the call while addressing a group of party workers at his Baridhara office in the city yesterday, sources in the party said.

When contacted, Manju, however, made no comment on the issue.

Ershad also asked Nazim Rahman, the newly appointed acting secretary general of the party, to reorganise the JP within the next six months. Relieving Anwar Hossain Manju from the post of secretary general on Monday, the JP chief appointed Nazim Rahman the acting secretary general the same day.

A number of party MPs including leaders of various front organisations of the JP also met Anwar Hossain Manju yesterday amidst speculation that the party is set to split once again, said party sources.

See Page 12 Col 6



Price of rice is still high, although the city's Badamtali wholesale market has a huge stock of rice with adequate supplies from districts. — Star photo

First Hajj flight leaves for Jeddah

The first Hajj flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines left Dhaka yesterday for Jeddah with 350 ballotee pilgrims, reports UNB.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad saw off the pilgrims at the Zia International Airport at 9 am.

The Foreign Minister went inside the aircraft BG 0101, talked to the pilgrims and enquired about their well-being.

Earlier, the Minister offered Munajat seeking divine blessing for the safe journey of the pilgrims and their return.

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Engineer Mosharraf Hossain, State Minister for Religious Affairs Moulana Md Nurul Islam, Vice-Principal Abdus Shahid and the Chief Executive of Biman, Civil Aviation Authority, Islamic Foundation and other senior officials were present on the occasion.

This year, Biman will operate 24 flights to carry 8069 ballotee Hajj pilgrims to Jeddah for performing the holy Hajj.

The Hajj flight will continue till March 23 with two flights each day on March 5, 12 and 19. Biman has chartered two wide bodied aircraft for smooth operation of its Hajj flight, the first of which arrived here on March 2 and already went into operation. The second aircraft will reach Dhaka by the weekend.

Biman will also start operating its flights for non-ballotee Hajj pilgrims from March 9.

Jamaat won't follow BNP in returning to JS: Nizami

Jamaat-e-Islami secretary general Maulana Mattur Rahman Nizami yesterday said the Jamaat MP will not follow BNP in returning to Parliament.

"BNP's decision will not change our position on joining or not joining Parliament," he told UNB last night.

The Jamaat leader said his party had decided to abstain from parliament to protest the government move to legitimise the so-called peace accord on the CHT.

"We'll think about our decision after the CHT issue is over," he said.

Jamaat-e-Islami has three members in the 330-seat Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament).

Nizami refrained from making any comment on the agreement between the ruling Awami League and main opposition BNP and said that "BNP bargained with the government on its own party demands."

In reply to a question, he said the BNP-led seven-party combine will move ahead with its anti-government action programme on different national issues.

People groaning under price hike: Khaleda

BONPARA, Natore, Mar 3: BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia today said they cannot abstain from parliament when prices of essential commodities are running high causing miseries to the common man, reports UNB.

"BNP cannot stay away from parliament at this hour of distress. Prices of essentials are running high without any check," she told a public meeting at Bonpara High School ground in Natore on her way to Rajshahi.

Begum Zia ridiculed the recent statement of the Prime Minister who in the wake of defection of two BNP MPs said of giving a big surprise to the nation.

3 kilo gold seized at Ctg airport

CHITTAGONG, Mar 3: About three kilograms of smuggled gold worth about Tk 10 lakhs were seized by customs officials at Chittagong airport today.

Official sources said the gold was seized from a passenger, Md Yunus, who returned from Dubai today at Chittagong airport.

Customs officials during a search into the luggage of the passenger found 382 gold chains wrapped inside some chocolate packets.

"Onion, salt and rice prices are her big surprise to the nation," said Begum Zia.

She said it goes to the credit of the government that onion sells at Tk 60, salt at Tk 40 and coarse rice at Tk 20 per kg.

The BNP Chairperson said when people are groaning under the spiraling prices, the market is flooded with goods smuggled from across the border, the government is engaged in a heinous conspiracy of giving away one-tenth of the country's territory.

Under the circumstances, Begum Zia said, BNP will play a strong role both in and outside parliament to protect the interest of people and nation.

"The people do not want this government in power for a long time," the Leader of the Opposition said.

She was highly critical of the Ganges water sharing treaty with India, the CHT peace accord and high price of essentials.

Referring to the CHT peace agreement, Begum Zia said the country's sovereignty was compromised by signing agreement with the insurgents who are patronised by India.

She warned of a serious unrest across the country if the government is not refrained from handing over Chittagong

See Page 12 Col 3

'Effigy making materials' recovered from DU hall

By DU Correspondent

Detective Police yesterday recovered a saree, a blouse and some other materials along with a portrait of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina from Jasimuddin Hall of Dhaka University and claimed that those were accumulated there to make an effigy of Sheikh Hasina and burn it in public.

Police said the materials were recovered from the sunshade of the hall during a raid at about 11:30 am.

The dormitory is a stronghold of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student

See Page 12 Col 5

One stabbed to death in city

By Staff Correspondent

Toll collectors stabbed an auto-rickshaw driver at Kamalapur in the city yesterday, sources at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital said.

Wajed Mia, 30, of Mugdopara in the city was stabbed in the neck when he was locked in an altercation with the toll collectors at the parking lot for the auto-rickshaws at Kamalapur.

He was rushed to the hospital where he died later.

UNB adds: One Hashem Ali

See Page 12 Col 8

Home ministry asks NGO Bureau Enact law to check religious conversion by voluntary bodies

By Masud Arif

The Home Minister has asked the NGO Affairs Bureau to take necessary steps for enactment of a law to control activities, specially the act of religious conversions by some voluntary organisations and Christian missionary churches.

Most of the churches and religious NGOs used most of their funds for religious conversion, said a summary report attached with a Home Ministry letter to the NGO Affairs Bureau recently.

The recruitment of employees in these institutions was biased towards some communities, said the ministry letter, a copy of which was obtained by The Daily Star.

A senior assistant secretary of the Home Ministry's security

wing sent the letter, dated October 22, 1997, and a three-page summary report on the matter.

The letter, explaining different points, said it was very urgent to enact a realistic/timely law so that no person or group could convert anyone offering money, job or any other thing.

"Many of these institutions (Christian missionary churches and NGOs) do not offer jobs to people who do not belong to a particular religious community. Besides, the jobs are provided to this particular group without judging the eligibility which is a violation of the Constitution of Bangladesh. As a result, qualified candidates of the other communities are deprived of their rights. This discrimination is to be

See Page 12 Col 7

Feasibility study on Ganges Barrage soon Tribunal for corruption cases, if needed: PM

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday that the government was now acting on a plan to revamp the Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAC).

Replying to various questions in the House during the Prime Minister's question-time, Sheikh Hasina said corruption cases could be disposed of through a special tribunal if people wished so.

"Right at the moment, we have no such plan to set up any special tribunal. But, if people want we may consider," the Prime Minister said.

About allegations of corrupt practices by a section of BAC personnel, Hasina said the parliamentary standing committee concerned could always monitor any such misdeeds.

She noted that over the years, corruption penetrated in every sphere of the society and said, "We are trying to free the society from the disease of corruption. But first of all people have to change their mentality and a lot of motivation is needed for this."

Replying to another question, the Prime Minister informed the House that a 30-month feasibility study involving Tk 63.55 crore would begin soon to prepare a 'Plan of Ac-

tion' to build the Ganges Barrage. In this regard, she mentioned that an international seminar on Water Resources Management and Development in Bangladesh with particular reference to the Ganges river is scheduled to be held from March 8 to 10 in Dhaka with the assistance of ADB and Japan.

She also said that the prospect of setting up a hydroelectric power station on the proposed Ganges Barrage would also be explored during the feasibility study.

Replying to a question relating to foreign investment, the Prime Minister gave a resume

See Page 12 Col 1

No decision yet on appointing new NBR chief

By Special Correspondent

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) is yet to have a chairman since the resignation of Internal Resources Division (IRD) Secretary Shah Abdul Hannan last month.

Hannan resigned reportedly under pressure from powerful quarters two months before his one-year contract expired.

The Secretary of IRD is the ex-officio Chairman of NBR. Saiful Islam Khan, member of NBR, is now holding charge as acting chairman.

The Finance Ministry is looking for a suitable person to become IRD Secretary to hold charge of its vital organ for revenue collection, the NBR, according to highly placed sources.

Revenue collection of the government is still less than the target, the shortfall in January stood at Tk 218 crore, raising the total deficit in the current fiscal to Tk 754 crore, the sources said.

Unless a suitable person with strong commitment, character and proven track record, able to resist pressure

See Page 12 Col 2

Aminul Islam to be made envoy to Canada

By Staff Correspondent

The government has decided to appoint Aminul Islam, Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as the new envoy to Canada.

The agreement seeking his approval by the host government has been forwarded to Ottawa following approval of the Prime Minister, said official sources.

The position of High Commissioner to Canada has been lying vacant for over six months after the recall of M R Osmani, a former foreign secretary.

Two other nominations for the ambassadorship which were previously made were cancelled by the government.

The first nomination was given to Khandaker Mosharraf

See Page 12 Col 6

Announcement

As a follow up of The Daily Star's initiative on "Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs Speak Out" a seminar will be held on "Investment Opportunities for Young Entrepreneurs".

Date : 8th March, 1998
Time : 6 p.m.
Venue : British Council Auditorium
Speakers : Faruk Sobhan, Executive Chairman, BOI
Rokeya A Rahman, President, Bangladesh Employers' Association
Syed Manzur Elahi, Chairman, Apex Group of Industries.
Participation : By Registration only (free of charge)

You can register by sending your particulars by Fax to The Daily Star. Fax No: 863035

Join the Young Entrepreneurs and Move Bangladesh Towards the 21st Century

See Page 12 Col 8

Bangabandhu Murder Case

Video of interview of Farooq, Rashid screened at court

Col Rashid and Col Farooq in a television interview about 21 years ago had admitted their leading role in the August 15, 1975 incident in which Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was killed along with his family members, reports UNB.

The video of interview with Grenada TV was shown on TV screen in the District and Sessions Judge's Court yesterday by the prosecution in the Bangabandhu Murder Case.

The court ruled out the defence objection to the presentation of the 1976 recorded video.

Lawyers in the court said this is for the first time in the history of Bangladesh that a video record is screened in a lower court of the country. The court watched the document for about 30 minutes.

In the recorded interview,

the two army officers accused in the case described the plan and action of the August 15 operation.

"Yes, we had to kill him (Mujib), a young Rashid was seen as saying when the video cassette of the interview was shown in the courtroom during the hearing of the case.

Before confessing the direct involvement, Rashid was seen describing a dismal situation prevailing in the country. He told the interviewer Anthony Mascarenhus, a veteran journalist, that they felt the need for a change in the state power.

"The country required a change and we had to change it," Col Farooq was seen as saying. Sitting in the dock Farooq also keenly watched his video interview, which the prosecution deem a vital document. Rashid

and 13 other accused persons are absconding.

Wearing a red shirt and a black bledger, the young lieutenant colonel Farooq told the television that his 1st Bengal Lancer and 2-Field Artillery of Col Rashid took part in the August 15 operation.

"Only 28 tanks, 18 artillery guns and 700 soldiers took part in the operation," he told the interviewer confidently.

Replying to Mascarenhus, he said the tanks were empty (without ammunition of the Lancer unit mentioned two reasons: 1)

See Page 12 Col 8

The American Alumni Association
a non-profit Bangladeshi society that aims to promote fellowship among American graduates and increased educational interaction between Bangladesh and the United States

is seeking to form a register of American graduates in Bangladesh.

Individuals interested in taking part in this association are invited to contact 873-444 for further information.

D-103