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## Transfer of 2 Ctg customs officials sparks off discontent

From Staff Correspondent  
CHITTAGONG, July 18: The sudden transfer of two customs officials and their release in 24 hours have sparked off discontent in the rank and file at Chittagong Custom House, customs sources said.

The orders for transfer and release of two principal appraisers — Farid Uddin and Abul Kasem — who are also leaders of Customs Officials and Employees Coordination Council (COECC) were issued on Thursday.

The orders angered the members of COECC, who immediately met the Commissioner of Chittagong Customs House and submitted a memorandum. They demanded that the orders should not be made effective till July 30, the date for their biennial conference. The COECC, meanwhile, announced a strike for July 20.

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## Normalcy returns in Kailashtila, Haripur gas fields

From Staff Correspondent  
SYLHET, July 18: Situation in the Haripur and Kailashtila gas fields became normal this afternoon following a meeting between the striking workers and the Managing Director of the Sylhet Gas Fields Company, an official of the company informed tonight.

The workers are expected to resume work next morning after seven days of deadlock, the source said.

The managing director assured the workers of considering regularisation of their jobs in December this year. He also assured them of taking necessary steps to raise the wages after consulting the high official, the source added.

The situation became tense on July 10 when a news broke out that some new hands have been appointed in the gas fields, enraging the casual workers.

The workers locked the offices of Haripur and Kailashtila gas fields Tuesday and even manhandled the senior administrative officer of the Haripur Gas Field.

## Ctg-Cox's Bazar road link restored

CHITTAGONG, July 18: The direct road communication between Chittagong and Cox's Bazar which remained snapped for last four days has been restored today, reports BSS.

According to the Bus Owners' Association, the road communication was restored this morning following the recession of flood water from the road.

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## D-8 summit on Nov 28-29

# Preparations on for holding biggest gathering of world leaders in Dhaka

By M Anwarul Haq

Bangladesh has started taking extensive preparations for organising the single biggest gathering of world leaders in Dhaka on November 28-29 when it hosts the summit of the newly launched D-8.

The programme is likely to include a half-day retreat by the attending leaders either to the picturesque Sunderbans or the lush green hills in Sylhet.

Presidents or prime ministers of Egypt, Iran, Indonesia, Pakistan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Turkey and host Bangladesh will meet on a common platform in the capital to unveil

the future course of action of the Developing Eight or D-8, launched in Istanbul in June last year.

A high-level national preparatory committee has been formed to organise the summit. Headed by Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, the committee includes the finance minister, commerce and industries minister, home minister, state minister for foreign affairs, state minister for information and the state minister for cultural affairs. The committee met on July 14 to work out the details.

In conjunction with the summit, a three-day cultural programme participated by leading artists from the eight member countries will be held in the city from November 23 to 25.

Diplomatic observers feel that the Dhaka meet will harness the real potential of the new economic alliance and set it rolling in the desired direction.

The D-8 comprises eight OIC member states having a combined population of nearly 800 million and commanding

## Varsity officers' 15-day strike begins today

The officers of different universities will begin a 15-day strike today to press home their four-point demand, reports UNB.

The demands include officers' representation in different university bodies like Senate and Syndicate, amendment to their pay scale, increasing the age-limit for retirement to 65 years and withdrawal of decision to cut 20 pc in pension money.

Bangladesh Inter-University Officers' Federation announced the programme as the authorities concerned had not taken any step to meet their demands, said a press release yesterday.

It said the federation earlier suspended its programme of work abstention from June 21 to July 5 following a written assurance from the Standing Committee of the University Council.

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## Rallies, processions banned in Barisal-5 Scores of AL, BNP MPs crowd town

Star Report

Scores of MPs belonging to the ruling and opposition parties have assembled in Barisal town to work for their respective party candidates in the parliamentary by-election in Barisal-5 constituency, scheduled for tomorrow.

Dozens of top politicians of rival parties, ministers and those enjoying the rank and status of ministers also visited the constituency over the last couple of weeks.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission yesterday banned rallies and processions in the constituency of from Saturday midnight till Monday midnight, our Barisal correspondent reported.

However, BNP leaders and activists believe that their candidate should win the by-election as it is a traditional BNP seat. But the AL leaders and activists believe that they should get the seat as the voters of the area had always supported a 'ruling party' candidate.

According to our correspondent, more than half dozen ministers and front-ranking Awami League leaders including Salahuddin Yousuf, Abdur Razzak, Tofael Ahmed, Matia Chowdhury, Mohammad Nasim, Suranjit Sengupta, Abul Hasnat Abdullah, KM Jahangir, Dr Mozammel Haq visited the constituency after the election scheduled was announced by the Election Commission.

A number other AL leaders and MPs are still there, busy campaigning for their candidate.

See Page 12 Col 2

## Vote for BNP to show no confidence in govt: Khaleda

BARISAL, July 18: BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia today called upon the people to demonstrate their no-confidence in the government by voting for her party candidate in Monday's by-election in Barisal-5 constituency, reports UNB.

"Cast your vote for sheaf of paddy (BNP's election symbol) to show that you do not want this government," Begum Zia told a huge public meeting here at Bels Park in the afternoon.

The Barisal-5 seat of Jatiya Sangsad fell vacant following the death of BNP MP Dr Ehteshamul Haq Nasim Biswas, son of former President Abdur Rahman Biswas.

Accusing the government of not fulfilling its election pledges, Begum Zia said the Awami League government has

## Barisal by-polls 44 centres out of 93 are 'highly sensitive'

From Aroop Talukdar

BARISAL, July 18: In the Barisal-5 constituency, out of 93 voting centres, 44 are highly sensitive, 41 less sensitive and 8 are 'normal', according to sources in the Election Commission.

There are 2,12,296 voters in 10 unions and a Pourasava in the constituency where by-election will be held on Monday.

There will be one presiding officer, one assistant presiding officer and a magistrate on duty in each centre. Thirty policemen will be deployed in each highly sensitive centre.

Besides, 200 BDR personnel and 300 armed policemen will be on mobile duty on the election day.

A contingent of 250 army personnel will be on duty on the polling day, the sources said.

## Pakistan to sue US over non-delivery of 28 F-16s

ISLAMABAD, July 18: Pakistani law minister has gone to Washington to consult an US law firm on taking the United States to court over non-delivery of 28 F-16 fighter planes paid for by Islamabad, an official source said today, reports AFP.

The delivery of the planes, for which Islamabad had paid 658 million dollars under a 1989 deal, was stopped by a US embargo on military sales to Pakistan in 1990 because of concerns over the country's nuclear programme.

Law Minister Khalid Anwar left for Washington yesterday, the source said, noting that Pakistan was keeping all options open, including taking the issue to a US court.

Islamabad has been asking the United States to either deliver the planes or refund the money.

The News Daily here quoted an unnamed senior official as saying Anwar would hold 'final consultations' with the American legal firm, Patton Boggs, on filing a suit against the US for 'not performing contractual obligations.'

The official told the newspaper a lawsuit was likely to be filed in a US settlement court within this month.

Officials and experts here believe Islamabad has a strong case, the paper said.

Pakistan has until March next year take the case to a court under US law, the paper said.

## Police yet to confirm identity of body found inside sack

Cantonment police have become confused with the identity of the young girl whose body was found floating inside a sack in a pond in city's Khilkhet area Thursday morning.

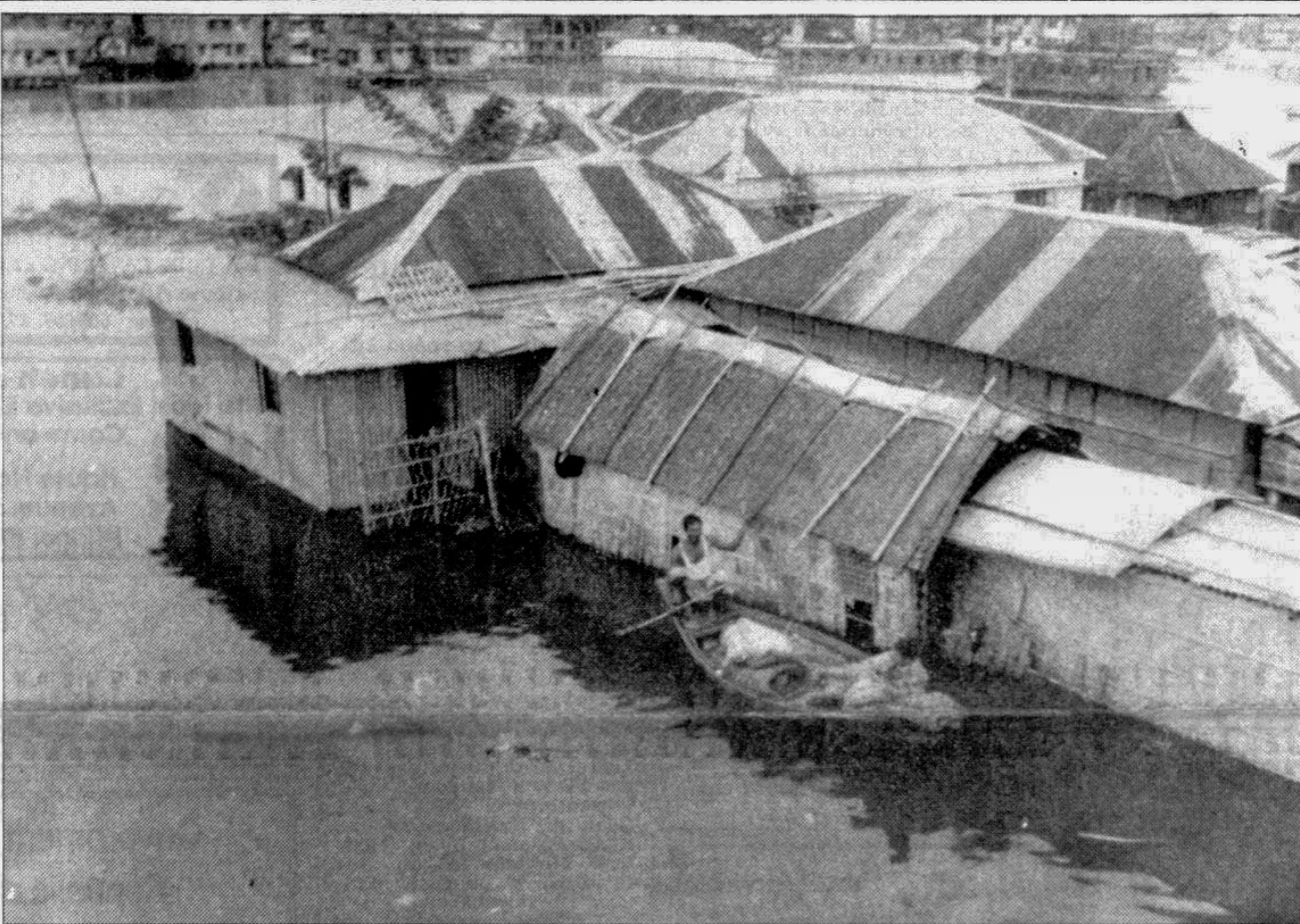
An officer of Cantonment Thana said last night that they were yet to confirm whether the girl was Ferdousi, wife of an electrician, Abbas Ali.

Earlier on Friday, Alamgir, an Army sepoy, came to the thana and claimed that the dead was his sister, Ferdousi. He also alleged that Abbas and his parents were involved in the killing.

But Alamgir did not contact police further after he was asked to give a petition regarding the identification of his sister. Besides, he did not even go to Dhaka Medical College Hospital to see the body in the morgue.

Meanwhile, police arrested Abbas Ali, his father Sayeed Ali, and mother Rabeya Begum as suspects in the murder.

The girl was suspected to have been strangled. Abbas told police that his wife, Ferdousi, went to the latrine at their house in Nalache



Low-lying areas in and around the city have been inundated due to incessant rains. — Star photo

## Flood situation worsens in central districts

The flood situation yesterday deteriorated further with the inundation of fresh areas in the central districts while the flood waters have started receding from the northwestern districts and the southeastern hilly region, report agencies.

The Flood Warning Centre in a statement feared that the situation is likely to deteriorate today in the central districts due to "constant rise of water level of the Padma."

The current flood has so far claimed 25 lives across the country, an official in the Relief Ministry said here yesterday.

However, the unofficial death toll is more than double. The official said seven people died in Chittagong, six in Rangpur, five in Gaibandha, three each in Kurigram and Cox's Bazar and one in Bogra.

A total of 40.34 lakh people

in 25 districts were affected by the flooding which damaged crops, bridges, embankments and houses.

Of them, 16.79 lakh people were affected in Chittagong, five lakh in Feni, 5.67 lakh in Jamalpur and 4.31 lakh in Cox's Bazar.

The official sources could not give the extent of damage to the crops and infrastructure. Reports from greater Faridpur, Mymensingh and Dhaka regions said flood waters have entered vast areas inundating croplands and endangered flood control embankments in several places.

In Magara, some parts of the district town and other low-lying areas have gone under water. Officials said many houses were washed away as the Madhumati river eroded at some places.

In Rajbari, many houses have been submerged while a number of families were marooned.

In Madaripur, the water level in the river Arial Kha, a tributary of the Padma, was flowing 38 cm above the danger mark at the town point inundating the low-lying areas.

In Mymensingh, the overall flood situation in the district aggravated further as fresh areas of eight thanas were submerged yesterday.

A sand lair has been developed on more than two hundred acres of crop land due to erosion in the river Nital at Ghosegan in Dhubaura thana. Standing crops, dwelling houses, roads, culverts, bridges and flood protection embankment from Bhuiyapara to Raipur of Dhubaura thana came

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## Govt has failed to tackle flood situation: BNP

Opposition BNP yesterday blamed the government for failing to tackle the flood situation in the country, reports UNB.

Expressing deep concern over the current flood situation, the emergency meeting of the party's relief and rehabilitation committee alleged that the government has failed to take effective measures to tackle the situation despite forecast from the flood forecasting centre.

"Due to government's inefficiency, the death toll is going up day by day. Lacks of marooned people are passing days in hunger under open sky," the meeting observed.

Refuting the government's claim of adequate relief operation, the meeting alleged that there have been acute shortage of food, drinking water and medicine in the flood-hit areas.

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## US intensifies efforts to defuse arms race in South Asia

WASHINGTON, July 18: US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott intensifies efforts to short-circuit a South Asia arms race when he visits India and Pakistan next week for the first time since they tested nuclear weapons, reports Reuters.

Since the tit-for-tat explosions stunned the world last May, the United States has become the primary mediator trying to prod and provoke the two countries into forsaking testing and deployment of a destabilising nuclear arsenal.

Talbott, who leaves Washington today, has previously held separate talks in the US capital and Germany on the nuclear issue with special envoys

from both governments.

During stops in New Delhi on Monday and Tuesday and in Islamabad on Wednesday, he is expected to take those talks to a new level in meetings with Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

He carries a personal message to each leader from US President Bill Clinton that reinforces the unified non-proliferation demands and commitments put forward in recent weeks by the five nuclear powers and the Group of Eight industrialised nations.

"I think we've already established at the government and at the

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## Nelson Mandela weds Graca Machel



South African President Nelson Mandela introduces his wife Graca Machel (R) to his former prison guard, Christo Brand (C-L) yesterday during his 80th birthday celebration at Mandela's Pretoria residence. Mandela and Machel got married on the same day. — AP/UNB

## Reservation of women's seats Lok Sabha Bill faces stiff resistance

From Pallab Bhattacharya

NEW DELHI, July 18: A parliamentary bill reserving one-third of the seats for women in the Lok Sabha and the state assemblies has run into rough weather following stiff resistance from some opposition parties and a group of Muslim MPs cutting across party lines.

The opponents of the bill, which include Samajwadi Party (SP), Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), have succeeded in preventing introduction of the bill in Lok Sabha in a display of unprecedented protests which saw their lawmakers storming the well of the house repeatedly and snatching papers from the Speaker GMC Balayogi and Law Minister Thambi Durai.

The bill seeking to bring 84th amendment of the Constitution needs the approval of two-third majority of Lok Sabha which the ruling BJP-led coalition lacks.

RJD, SP and BSP want the reservation for women to be slashed from 33 to 15 per cent giving the remaining seats to

women belonging to scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, other backward classes and the minority community. These parties rely mainly on the backward classes and minority for their vote bank in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar states.

The group of Muslim MPs, spearheaded by MAA Fatmi of RJD, feel the bill in its present form would truncate the representation in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies. While stating that they were not opposed to the spirit of the bill, opponents of the bill argue that 'injustice' would be done by backward classes and minorities if seats are not reserved for these section of the society within the women's quota.

Hopes had run high about the smooth passage of the bill after the ruling coalition, main opposition Congress and the left parties agreed at an all-party meeting to back the bill in its present form. Congress President Sonia Gandhi wanted the legislation to be tabled in par-

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