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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressing a businessmen's conference organised by the FBCCI at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel yesterday. — PID photo

PM urges businessmen

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achieve quick growth depending on domestic market alone," the Prime Minister said. "We have no alternative but to spread over the international market. We have to reap the benefit of globalised economic system through massive expansion of export-oriented industries."

Highlighting different steps like strengthening the Board of Investment (BOI), and formulating new laws for setting up private export processing zones, Hasina said the government is always active to ensure a healthy business environment through reforming institutions and policies.

She hoped that the privatisation process will accelerate in future as some vital problems have been sorted out and the interest of workers have been looked after.

Stressing the importance of a sound and dynamic banking sector for economic development, Hasina said strict reform policies in the banking sector may hurt the interests of many.

"But interest of the nation is above everything," she said. "We know public opinion is against bank loan defaulters."

She said actions under conventional rules will be taken against those who have become defaulters as a normal outcome of doing business.

"But all types of laws including Bankruptcy Act will be applied against those who had misappropriated loans and those who are deliberately not repaying loans," she said. "It is my firm belief that the business community will give full cooperation in this regard in the interest of the nation."

Hasina also urged the busi-

ness community to boldly come forward to make the government efforts to bring dynamism in economic activities successful.

Referring to the Investment Advisory Council comprising representative from the finance, commerce and industries ministries, BOI and FBCCI, Hasina hoped that this would help gear up the activities of BOI.

The finance minister said the government is setting up an industrial development fund which will address the need for

Ctg port

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they have nothing fear as the port would not threaten their jobs.

The secretary also underlined the government's firm stand on the project.

The project would cost about 500 million dollars, handling more than 300,000 containers annually when it becomes operational in 2001. It would create at least 15,000 jobs, making it the biggest joint venture in the country.

The trade unions had recently formed an alliance led by leader of the CBA Mahfuzur Rahman.

The CBA leader reiterated their opposition to the project saying they had been opposing it on the grounds of loss of jobs by workers, 'security threats' to the naval and air bases through 'espionage' and 'smuggling'.

The alliance of trade unions had threatened to go for agitation if the government did not accept their demand by July 31. Their opposition prevented the ground breaking ceremony of the project on July 14.

industrial term lending.

"It is true that term lending is not up to the mark. But it is also true that term lending should be done in such a way that loans are not defaulted," Kibria added.

Tofael Ahmed said despite a dismal picture of export performance in India and Pakistan, Bangladesh's export grew by over 17 per cent.

Private container terminal and deep sea port are under process to ease congestion in the port, he pointed out.

Yousuf Abdullah Haroon welcomed the budgetary steps to protect local industries and to rehabilitate sick industries, necessary actions in this regard should start soon, he said.

The FBCCI chief also hailed different moves by the government in different fields — political, economic, infrastructure development, banking and investment.

He analysed the current economic situation and looked into allegations by some businessmen that the country is performing low.

Haroon said those industrialists who had failed in the face of rapid trade liberalisation are now finding the economy in a 'frustrating situation'. On the other hand, the onslaught of smuggling has also pushed many industrialists and businessmen to a corner and they also have a 'negative view about the economy'.

Haroon said there had been a 'false flash' in the economy because of easy money coming out of banks and as bribes. Because of strict loan disbursement policy, money circulation has reduced, he added.

He also said there is a net deficit in rural financing which is also giving a picture of economic downturn.

Proposal to be placed at Colombo summit

Dhaka for creating SAARC fund for the disabled

Bangladesh is expected to propose the creation of a special fund for the disabled in the SAARC region at the 10th SAARC summit, a highly placed official source said yesterday, reports BSS.

The source said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is likely to place the proposal before the heads of state and government when they meet in Colombo for the SAARC Summit beginning July 29.

The concept paper on the Bangladesh proposal has already been circulated among the member countries, the source said.

According to one estimate nearly 100 million people are disabled in the SAARC region.

Bangladesh views that it is time that something concrete

should be done through collective efforts in an institutional manner for these hapless people who live mostly on doles or on charity. A fund would be helpful in taking up concrete projects to redress their distress, the source added.

Bangladesh plans to take up the issue of arsenic contamination at the summit before its menacing impact engulfs the entire region, the source said.

The other matters that Bangladesh would like to highlight at the summit included SAFTA-South Asian Free Trade Agreement. "Bangladesh would ask for extension of time for SAFTA to come into effect," the source said.

As per earlier arrangement, SAFTA would become operational by 2001.

DC Barisal

replies to show cause notice

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, July 19: Deputy Commissioner of Barisal Mohammad Alauddin this afternoon replied to the show-cause notice served on him by the chief of the local Electoral Enquiry Committee on his meeting with Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday.

The Divisional Commissioner and DIG of Police of Barisal, the Deputy Commissioner, and the Superintendent of Police had met the BNP chief when she came here to address a public rally in favour of her party candidate.

Chief of the Electoral Enquiry Committee A K M Moshed served show-cause notices on the officials asking them to explain why they met the Leader of the Opposition who was on election tour.

The notices were served following an Awami League allegation that the officials had violated certain provisions of the electoral code of conduct.

In his reply, the DC said that it was his official responsibility to meet the leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad to see that adequate safety and security measures for her had been ensured, he told newsmen.

Body found

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police over telephone that Ferdousi, who, according to him, fled away from her husband's house at Nalanchhara under Cantonment thana on Wednesday morning, was staying at their village home in Narsingdi.

After the recovery of the women's body, aged about 25, a murder case was filed and Abbas, his father Sayeed Ali, and mother Rabeya Begum were arrested and imprisoned at the Dhaka Central Jail.

Quoting an acquaintance of Alamgir, an official at the Cantonment thana said last night that Alamgir believed that his sister, Ferdousi, was not happy in her new life. He told the man that he might harass Abbas's family by identifying the dead as his sister.

The investigating officer of the case is likely to leave the capital for Alamgir's village Uzirchar in Narsingdi today to check out his information regarding Ferdousi. Besides, efforts are on to find out the identity of the dead girl.

Barisal by-polls

From Page 1
date may secure the third position, they observed.

The seat fell vacant following the death of BNP lawmaker Dr Ehteshamul Huq Nasim Biswas, son of former President Abdur Rahman Biswas, in March this year.

BNP candidate Majbar Rahman Sarwar told The Daily Star today that he was addressing massive rigging by Awami League.

Sarwar, who was elected to the Fifth Parliament from the constituency said, "I am optimistic of victory by a large margin if a fair election is held. But the AL seems to be serious about snatching the traditional BNP seat this time."

Awami League candidate Mohiuddin Ahmed said, "I have no reason to lose the election if my supporters are allowed to cast their vote peacefully."

Mohiuddin, who was voted to parliament in 1991 from a neighboring constituency, claimed, "The BNP candidate would try to win by rigging of votes and creating violence in the polling centres."

The DC, who is the Returning Officer for the by-election, told newsmen this afternoon that he had taken adequate preparation and security measures to contain any possible violence or attempt to rig the polls in any of the 93 polling centres in the constituency.

Some three hundred Army personnel, two hundred BDR personnel and three hundred armed policemen would be on mobile duty on the polling day. Thirty policemen will be deployed at each of the 'highly sensitive' centres, he said.

The local administration and the Election Commission have jointly identified 44 polling centres as 'highly sensitive' and 44 centres as 'less sensitive' and only eight centres as 'normal'.

The EC has decided to deploy 93 magistrates in all the 93 polling centres. Besides, 80 magistrates will be on mobile duty. "The presiding officers would look after the polling process while the magistrates would take care of law and order," the DC said.

Meanwhile, dozens of central leaders of both AL and BNP have gathered here to back their respective candidates, giving the city dwellers a clear impression that both the contending parties are very serious about the seat.

Some election monitoring groups from home and abroad have also come here to observe the polling.



Sammilita Nari Samaj leaders addressing a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday. — Star photo

Khaleda to visit flood-hit Feni today

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia will visit the flood affected areas of Feni today, reports UNB.

She will return to Dhaka the same day, party sources said.

Reports on Private Members' Bill finalised

A meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Private Members' Bill and Resolution was held yesterday at Sangsad Bhaban, reports BSS.

Committee chairman Col (Retd) Shawkat Ali presided over the meeting, a parliament secretariat press release said.

It said the meeting examined and considered two Private Members' Bills and finalised reports after detailed discussion. Earlier, the bills were introduced before parliament by Dr Rustom Ali Farazi and Giasuddin Quader Chowdhury.

Cairn poised

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issue remains unsettled for the last eight months, the sources said.

Meanwhile, Petrobangla is reviewing the first gas bill of about 1.7 million dollars (Tk 8 cr) given by Cairn to Petrobangla for supply of gas from Sangu field. The sources said that the price of Sangu gas during the June-August quarter was fixed at 2.25 dollar per unit as the international price of Heavy Sulphur Fuel Oil (HSFO), which is the basis for calculating Sangu's gas price, has fallen. The gas price in the previous quarter was fixed at 2.6 dollar per unit.

As the local price of gas is only 1.1 dollar per unit, Petrobangla has to incur a heavy loss in purchasing Sangu's gas. Sangu is supplying 60 million cubic feet of gas per day (mmcf) to the national grid.

Cairn is pressurising the government and big gas consumers like KAFCO to purchase more gas from Sangu. The sources said that the government was buying 60 mmcf of gas by reducing productions in its own gas fields.

The country has gas supply shortfall, but due to lack of infrastructure and planning, it can not properly consume what is being produced now.

Draft Women & Children Repression Prevention Bill

Nari Samaj suggests major changes

By Staff Correspondent

Sammilita Nari Samaj has alleged that the government wants to use the proposed "Women and Children Repression Prevention Bill 1998 for 'political gains' rather than 'stopping repression' by eliminating flaws in the bill.

Addressing a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday, Nari Samaj leaders urged the Prime Minister to take personal initiative to formulate a law which will ensure that those responsible for repression are punished and cannot escape through its loopholes.

She suggested changes in six clauses of the proposed bill and said it (the bill) would not be acceptable without those changes.

The Nari Samaj leaders demanded exclusion of the terrorism-related sections 13, 14, 15 and 16, saying those were included in the draft bill for 'political gains'.

The suggestions by SNS include cancellation of the section on safe custody, introducing the term 'sexual assault' instead of rape, making provisions for action against any

thana or any judicial institution if they show reluctance to register cases and investigate those.

"Any repressed women or child should be compensated directly by the state and it will realise fine from the convicted person", it recommended.

"Our demand is to ensure punishment of criminals by modernising the Code of Criminal Procedure, Bangladesh Penal Code and the Evidence Act. We are well aware that any 'Special Act' lacks completeness and it runs the risk of being a 'black law' if political interests are involved in it," SNS said.

The Nari Samaj also called upon the political parties to reach a consensus on formulating a 'victim friendly act' and mobilising public opinion against repression on women and children.

Advocate Khaleda Khatun read out the written statement at the press conference while SNS convenors Shaheen Anam and Dr Naila Khan and members Farida Akhter, Shirin Akhter, Sultana Akhter Rubi and Hazera Sultana answers questions from newsmen.

Anup Chetia

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plaintain in the case, in his deposition before the court said that forged passport was recovered from the possession of Anup Chetia and that he and his associates had no legal documents for their stay in the country.

The court fixed August 9 for the next hearing of the cases. Charges were framed against the three in the two cases in the same court on July 10.

Chetia, Secretary General of the United Liberation Front of Assam, is also facing two other cases for illegal possession of foreign currency and a satellite telephone set.

Chetia and his two associates were arrested from a house at Adabar under Mohammadpur thana in the city on December 21 last year.

Flood situation

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while waters in Kushtia town gradually subsiding. In Sirajganj, although the Jamuna was flowing below the danger mark, flood situation did not improve in the district due to incessant rain.

Water level of the two smaller rivers, Korotoa and Baral, continued to rise.

Some three lakh people remained marooned by flood water in the district, where government relief was said to be inadequate.

In Jamalpur, three more children drowned in the flood water during the last two days in the district raising the death toll to 10.

A tornado lashed the flood-hit village of Sirajabad in Islampur thana Saturday night leaving at least 20 people injured, three of them seriously.

Officers begin strike

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tirement to 65 years and withdrawal of the decision to cut 20 per cent in pension money.

The Vice-Chancellor of DU, Professor AK Azad Chowdhury met the leaders of the Dhaka University Officers' Association yesterday morning.

The VC requested the officers to exempt the library from the ambit of the strike. But the officers turned down the proposal, sources said.

Meanwhile, operations of the university transports may also be affected due to fuel shortage. The strike is hindering the collection of necessary fuel which involves different requisitions, the sources said.

Sources in the federation, however, said that the meeting of the federation scheduled to be held on July 23 would consider the library and transport issues.

BSS adds: A large number of Dhaka University students have been affected due to the closure of the libraries ahead of their course final examinations.

Several student organisations including the Bangladesh Chhatra Union staged rallies demanding immediate reopening of the Dhaka University Central Library.

Course final examinations of some departments have already begun and final exams of all the departments under arts and social science faculties will begin very soon, campus sources said.

SAARC FMs

From Page 1
will be bilateral talks on the sidelines of the meeting, observers here said.

Indo-Pak leaders are scheduled to hold informal talks which is the first time since India and Pakistan carried out their nuclear tests in May this year.

Over 100 foreign correspondents were expected here to cover the summit, media officials said.

Boat capsizes: 3 drown in Bogra

BOGRA, July 19: Three people drowned and three others were missing after a boat capsized in the Bangali river in Sonatola thana of the district last night, reports UNB.

The deceased were identified as Abdul Baki, 40, of Charpara village, Emdadul Haque, 22, and Jaynal, 30, of Kamalpara village of the thana.

The CU Correspondent says: President of Bangladesh University Council (BUC) and Vice-Chancellor of Chittagong University Prof Abdul Mannan urged the leaders of Chittagong University Officers' Association and Bangladesh Inter University Officers Federation (BIUOF) to withdraw their strike programme.

SAARC

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Test Ban Treaty) and it would help to speed up nuclear disarmament," Muni said.

However, Nehru Museum Fellow Praful Bidwai dismissed Muni's statement as "nonsensical," leading to a heated exchange between the two members of the Indian delegation.

There was also a clash between pro and anti-nuclear delegates from Pakistan. Dr Rasool Bakhsh Rais of the Islamabad Area Study Centre accused India of having a hidden agenda of weakening Pakistan and said it was essential for Islamabad to "take a nuclear route to security against India."

His statement was challenged by Naik and Dr Perve Hoodbhoy of the Quaid-i-Azam University of Islamabad. Pointing out that Pakistan's economy would collapse within months because of the Western sanctions, Hoodbhoy warned that "if there is a breakdown in the governance, (Pakistani Prime Minister) Nawaz Sharif and the moderate army chief may be replaced by hardliners from Islamist groups."

The warning seems to have fallen on deaf ears as the Departmental Promotion Committee (DPC) meets today to dispose of the promotions of 32 officiating officers.

The problem began some 10 years ago.

In the eighties, when General Ershad created upazilas, as

Regularisation of 135 ASPs

From Page 1

many as 317 police inspectors were made "officiating" ASPs to fill in the many new posts.

That was a clear violation of the rule as the Public Service Commission was not consulted. It was also a violation of permitted proportion of departmental officers as ASPs. A 1973 rule says departmental officers cannot exceed 33 per cent of the total number of ASPs, the starting point for a BCS (police) cadre officer.

In 1995, the total number of allotted posts for ASPs was 432, of which not more than 144 should have been filled in from among the departmental promotees. But, according to the PSC, the number of departmental officers stood at 368.

Not until 2002, according to government estimates, will the quota be fulfilled by increased direct recruits through BCS examinations every year.

Based on PSC recommendations, a total of 51 officiating ASPs were regularised from February 12, 1990, March 28, 1990 and March 18, 1991.

In 1995, these 51 and another 297 officiating ASPs were seeking regularisation from the date of their taking charge as officiating ASPs.

In 1997, the home ministry took up the matter. The number of allotted posts for ASPs was now 477, a third or 159 of which should be filled from among departmental officers. Already 24 were filled in. So the question of regularising the rest 135 officiating ASPs came.

The dispute arose when the

Regularisation of 135 ASPs

From Page 1

home ministry proposed to regularise them, according to the PSC, from a 'specific date' (March 20, 1991).

Some of these officers went to the Administrative Tribunal demanding regularisation from their officiating date. They won the case but lost when the affected directly recruited officers took the matter to the Appellate Tribunal.

The departmental officers went to the Supreme Court, which ruled against their plea.

The dispute seemed to be over with the verdict of the highest court, but the home ministry was looking for other avenues to bypass the court ruling.

The ministry sought the opinion of the law ministry and asked the PSC to look into the matter, which resulted in a decision that went against the decision of the departmental officers.

"In the light of the rules and regulations, the regularisation of the services of the said 135 officiating ASPs from March 20, 1991 will in no way be in conformity with rule," the PSC said in its opinion.

On January 28, 1998, the PSC sent a list of 60 out of 135 officiating ASPs for regularisation. The rest failed to appear on the PSC list because of such lapses as absence of ACRs (annual confidential reports) or faulty ACRs.

A quick and out-of-the-way response came from the home ministry, which on March 2, 1998 ordered regularisation of

HEARTY CONDOLENCE

We sincerely express our heartfelt condolence on the sad & untimely demise of our Director **Al-Haj M. Zafar Sadeque** who died at About 5-00 A.M. on 18-07-98 in a road accident near Nikunja, Khilkhet, Dhaka. We pray to almighty Allah for eternal peace of his departed soul and for endurance for his family to bear this irreparable loss. His Qulkhani will be held to-day at 9/1, Moghbazar, Dhaka after Asar prayer.

On behalf of
Board of Directors,
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