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## Defense Counsel tells court

# Farooq signed confessional statement under coercion

Police illegally confined Col Farooq, an accused in the Bangabandhu murder case and tortured him to sign a prepared confessional statement in front of a magistrate, said defence counsel Khan Saifur Rahman in the District and Sessions Judge's Court yesterday, reports

The statement extracted under coercion cannot be accepted as valid document, he said.

Khan Saifur contended Farooq was taken to a seven-day police remand after his three months' detention expired on December 12, 1996. He was confined illegally at CID office and tortured before being taken to sign the prepared statement in front of Magistrate Afzalur Rahman.

"The confessional statement of Faroog was not countersigned by the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate. It was not the confessional statement of Farooq." said the Defence Counsel.

Khan Saifur said he first got the permission to meet his client in the jail on March 1, 1997 and at the first opportunity his (Farooq) petition to retract the confessional statement was submitted to the

"Confessional statement of an accused after seven days of remand in police custody is highly suspicious," the counsel quoted a judgement.

Pointing to three months' delay in filing the FIR. Khan Saifur said it had made the FIR questionable.

The counsel quoted the plaintiff, Mohitul Islam, as saying in his FIR said, "Now democracy is restored. Bangabandhu's daughter is now in power. So, none can kill me now and I am secured to file the case after 21 years."

See Page 16

Dhaka-Tangail

road link

restored

Dhaka-Tangail highway re-

sumed tonight reopening the

capital's direct route to the

north through the Jamuna

snapped on September 7 after a

bridge was damaged by the

floods, was restored after a bai-

ley bridge was set up on the spot.

Roads and Highways Depart-

ment workers assisted by army

engineers planted a 120-foot

bailey bridge in place of the

Dhaka-Tangail highway at 35

points, wrecking it in many

places, including Konabari,

Dherua, Postkamri, Dharla,

Kamorki, Sutrapur and Hijal-

repair work had already been

completed and further repairs

Air Commodore Ziarat

new Civil Aviation

authority Chairman

Ali, PSC, has taken over as the

new chairman of Civil Aviation

Authority, Bangladesh, an offi-

cial press release said yester-

Aviation Authority, he was the

commanding officer of Bangla-

desh Air Force (BAF) Pahar

Kanchanpur Base, the release

JU students

From Page 1

dents' Unity (GSU) yesterday

announced that it will boycott

classes today protesting the

"Syndicate's failure" to take any

Oikkya and the General Stu-

dents' Unity in separate memo-

randa to the JU authorities

yesterday demanded trial of the

rapists, detected by the Fact

Finding Committee, within the

rate processions and held ral-

lies on the campus chanting

League at the JU in a memoran-

dum submitted to the Syndicate

yesterday threatened of "dire

consequences" if any of their

From Page 1

an interest of 7.75 per cent

while that of pound sterling

will be 8 per cent. Both the

bonds will have a five-year

terest payment or payment

upon maturity will be made in

the same currency the bond was

In the case of immature en-

Investment in the bonds will

The fund will be adminis-

Loan applications to the

However, to review the ap-

To get loan from the pro-

tered by a company to be named

Industrial Development Com-

company should be sponsored

and recommended by a com-

mercial bank or any financial

plications, the company may appoint any foreign bank as

posed Industrial Development

Company, one has to have an

equity participation of 25 per

cent while the sponsoring fi-

nancial institution will provide

another 25 per cent of the total

sanctioned by the Company.

double to Tk 1800 crore.

The rest 50 per cent will be

According to an estimate,

the Company will be able to in-

vest a total of about Tk 900

crore which will ultimately

has for a long time been de-

manding formation of an in-

vestment fund exclusively to

facilitate long-term industrial

The business community

company.

advisor.

loans.

cashment, the bond holder will

be free of income tax, wealth tax

or all other taxes applicable on

investment by Bangladeshis.

not face any penalty or loss.

All payments including in-

The Bangladesh Chhatra

They also brought out sepa-

next 24 hours.

The Ganotantrik Chhatra

action against the rapists.

Meanwhile, the General Stu-

Before joining the Civil

day, reports BSS.

Air Commodore TA Ziarat

would go on in phases.

Officials said preliminary

The flood inundated the

damaged Postkamri bridge.

Officials informed that

The road link, which

Bridge, reports APB.

### Non-govt teachers, employees to get financial support after retirement

The proposal for post-service financial facilities for teachers and employees of the country's non-government educational institutions will be implemented soon as the Education Ministry has finalised the rules and regulations of the Non-government Teachers-Employees Welfare Trust. A meeting of the Welfare

Trust, held in the first week of the month with its chairman and education secretary Kazi Ragibuddin Ahmed in the chair, finalised the rules and terms of reference of the body, a highly placed source at the Education Ministry told BSS. According to the newly-ini-

tiated rules non-government teachers and employees will get financial facilities after their retirement. Those who resigned

### 5 hurt as boiler bursts in city

By Staff Correspondent At least five persons sustained burn injuries when a boiler of a foundry blewup at Postogola under Demra thana in the city yesterday afternoon.

Hospital sources identified the injured as Habib, 30, Lutfar, 35, Ishak, 35, Yunus, 40, and Rustam Ali. 35. All employees of the foundry, they were admitted at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Lutfar told our DMC correspondent that he heard a sudden big bang and saw smoke all around him while he was melting iron in the boiler at about

I cannot remember what happened then and how the incident took place," Lutfar said Hospital sources said the condition of injured Habib was critical.

#### Rubel murder

From Page 1 ernment to name any government official as accused in a

charge sheet The CID is expecting to get permission from the home ministry and the IGP today, the sources said.

Besides, the IO has to get a "positive opinion" from the public prosecutor before seeking government's permission. According to CID sources.

ASP Munshi Atiqur Rahman. IO of Rubel murder case, sought opinions from the Home Ministry and the IGP on Monday after getting "positive opinion" from the public prosecutor.

#### or were relieved of their jobs MIRZAPUR, Tangail, Sept due to accident or critical dis-22: Traffic movement on the eases and the dependents of the

same facilities. The directives (new rules) of the trust will be effective from first July of 1990, the source

dead persons will also enjoy the

Fund for the newly-established welfare trust will be raised through collection of monthly subscriptions from the teachers and employees.

Besides, grants for the fund will be collected from the government, education broads, national university, donor agencies and from different individ-

Teachers and staffs will contribute two per cent from their monthly government grants to the welfare fund. The fund will be utilised by purchasing national savings certificates to get maximum benefits.

According to the new laws education secretary will be the chairman, director general of the secondary and higher education directorate will be the vice-chairman and a representative from the teachers will be the member-secretary of the welfare trust.

#### Jute sector

From Page 1 BJMC Chairman Abu Osman Chowdhury said, though none of the state-owned jute mills were closed during the flood production declined significantly because of poor atten-

dance of the workers. "Only fifty per cent looms in the state-owned mills are in operation now," he said.

BJA Vice-President Rezaul Karim said that about 1.50 lakh bales of raw jute were damaged at Narayangani and Daulatpur, the two principal terminal markets.

A total of 100 jute traders have been affected by the flood Their stocks of raw jute worth about Tk 35 crore were damaged, Rezaul said.

In the jute spinning sector. the loss has been estimated at Tk 15 crore as about 10 thousand metric tones of raw jute were damaged in godowns.

Eight jute mills in the private sector have been closed and another 6 are operating partially. Rezaul said

The jute mill owners and traders demanded waiver of interest or moratorium on re-

payment of loans. They also demanded increase in the bank limit by at

#### leaders are accused of rape least 25 per cent and fresh loan. without any proof. Forex

# Dhaka's call at UNGA

From Page 1 rise in sea level.

He said elements and factors that affect the global eco-system and environment are interlinked. They transcend national frontiers and can only be addressed meaningfully by na-

"Highest priority should be given to this issue, which is a matter of survival for many peoples," he said.

tions acting in concert.

The foreign minister thanked Bangladesh's development partners. UN agencies and UN system for responding to the country's needs and requirements. He also thanked Secretary General Kofi Annan for his support to Bangladesh at this hour of need.

He said the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is working hard to reach the emergency relief to the flood-affected people.

Giving a brief account of the extent of damage inflicted by the catastrophic flooding. Azad said the country's two-thirds went under water with 31 million people affected and over 20 million forced out of their

He also pointed out the havoc created by the deluge has cut a swathe through crops.

houses, hospitals, schools and industrial plants.

"With the receding of flood water, we are facing an even greater problem of water-borne diseases, scarcity of food and safe drinking water, compounded by homelessness and unemployment," Azad told the UNGA session.

About the process of economic liberalisation, the foreign minister said the liberalisation process brings risks. grave challenges as well as opportunities, but in unequal

The external economic shock associated with this process is too powerful for the vul-

nerable economics to absorb. He called for creating a safety-net for the most vulnerable countries, the LDCs, to cushion the impact of globalisation.

Referring to the Official Development Assistance, the foreign minister said ODA in real terms has declined by more than 15 per cent from 1992 to

He called on all developed countries to reach the agreed target of ODA of 0.7 per cent for the developing countries and 0.15 to 0.2 per cent for LDCs by

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## Employment Bank to help create jobs: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said employment generation in the society is essential to build up a strong economy and steer the nation toward progress and prosperity, reports UNB.

"We'll involve the unemployed youth forces to build up a strong economy by utilising their dormant potential," she said, formally launching the first Employment Bank for the educated unemployed youths of the country.

Addressing the inaugural function at the Osmany Memorial Hall in the afternoon, Hasina said this bank will help solve the unemployment problems of the country.

The main target of the bank will be poverty alleviation, she said, adding that the youths with potential having no capability of taking loan by mortgaging asset will be benefited from the bank.

The Prime Minister handed over five approval letters to five vouth borrowers of the new bank, which will soon set up its branches at 31 places in the country, including the capital. Shahin Akhtar, Mohammad

Harunur Rashid, Sharmin Akhtar, Mohammad Shahidullah and Farid Ahmed Majumder are the five unemployed youths who received the approval letters from the Prime Minister vesterday.

ration from this bank to be selfreliant and to start life with new vigour, she said. The Prime Minister said the Employment Bank is a new

concept and this will serve that

section of the society which re-

The unemployed youths will

get money, guideline and inspi-

mained deprived for many years. "This bank is for the

commoners, not for the rich." She hoped that those taking loans from the bank will utilise the money in proper way and repay their loans in time for smooth functioning of the bank. "Utilise the opportunity to be self-reliant, don't abuse

the chance. The bank will provide loan to farming, poultry, fisheries. small business on agriculture and other sectors, specially in computer business.

Probe body finding

### Bldg collapsed in explosion caused by leak in gas pipeline

By Staff Correspondent The one-storey building at West Jurain collapsed on late Saturday night due to an explosion caused by a leak in the gas pipeline, according to the inquiry committee report submitted to Petrobangla yesterday.

Petrobangla had formed a committee on Monday to probe into the cause of the collapse of the building.

The three-member committee headed by the Managing Director of Gas Transmission Company Ltd, a subsidiary of Petrobangla, submitted its report yesterday, sources said.

According to Petrobangla sources, the inquiry committee suggested strengthening of the monitoring system of the Titas Gas Ltd and recommended creating awareness among the people for safety measures for connections of gas pipeline. sources said.

Congestion at Ctg port yet to ease

# 30000 MT foodgrains unloaded in 6 days

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Sept 22: Over 30,000 metric tons of foodgrains were unloaded from five ships at Chittagong Port in the past six days, Port sources said. Such a speedy discharge followed the government steps taken to expedite handling of foodgrains at the port.

The government deployed army and navy personnel at Chittagong Port to expediting the foodgrains handling work from September 17

Port sources said more 22,745 MT of foodgrains would be discharged from those five

Three more ships loaded with about 40,000 MT of foodgrains including rice and wheat, are now at the outer-anchorage of the port, official sources said.

Besides, six other vessels carrying over one lakh metric

Wage Board

From Page 1 Secretary, Wage Board chairman and BFUJ president as to why not the formation of the Wage Board, the provision of interim award of 30 per cent dearness allowance on May 23 1996 and the announcement of gratuity, group insurance, recreation leave and income tax payable by the owners under the Fifth Wage Board Award of May 29, 1997 be declared to have been without lawful authority.

The High Court gave this order on a writ petition filed by Dr. Md Ramizuddin on behalf of the Daily Purbakon, published from Chittagong.

The vacation bench comprised of Justice Mozammel Haque and Justice ABM Khairul Haque issued this ruling after the completion of preliminary hearing on the writ.

The press release said authorities of The Daily Janakantha, Daily Ittefaq, Ajker Kagoj also filed another writ petition which is now under trial.

tons of foodgrains are scheduled to arrive at Chittagong Port by the first week of October, the sources added. However, congestion of

ships and cargo at Chittagong Port is yet to ease as delivery of huge import cargo stuck up already at port sheds and jetties has not geared up, the Port source said.

About two lakh metric tons of imported goods remained dumped at Chittagong Port fol lowing disruption of road communication during the flood.

Road communication between Chittagong and other parts of the country resumed only two days ago.

#### Diarrhoea

From Page 1 among those who died yester-

Rezia Khatun (30) and her daughter China (12) of Itna thana, Jarina (1) of Astagrani thana and Nazrul Islam of Bajitpur thana died from diarrhoea on Monday

In Khagrachhari, diarrhoea claimed lives of at least 12 tribal people in the last two

A large number of diarrhoea patients were coming to the Dighinala thana hospital, local health officials said A report from Narsingdi

adds: Diarrhoea situation took

an alarming turn in six floodaffected thanas of the district. Unofficial sources said. some 100 people including 38

children died and 15,000 others were attacked by the disease in the last one month. The worst-affected thanas are Narsingdi Sadar, Raipura,

Palash and Shibpur. The district Civil Surgeon's office confirmed 25 deaths and put the number of the attacked people at 7,000.

#### Multipurpose From Page 1

will need another two years.

After seven years, the government plans to go for a circular rail track on the embankment to run monorail commuter service, said the official. · Formation of three commit-

tees for the gigantic task will be announced within a day or two, said sources. The prime minister herself will chair the policylevel steering committee, while water resources minister will head implementation-level committee. A third one on technical aspects will have three BUET professors and experts from all concerned departments and is expected to be headed by the BWDB chief engineer for central zone.

According to official sources, this project is an ex-tension of the Tk. 700 crore FAP-8B Phase-I, commonly known as Dhaka Integrated Flood Protection Project -which is near completion now. The ADB-financed Phase-I covered the entire western half of Dhaka, from Tongi to Buriganga Friendship Bridge.

When completed, the new project is expected to rid the capital of the extra traffic leading to and from the Bangabandhu Bridge.

Chittagong-bound vehicles from North Bengal will be diverted from Joydevpur to the "Eastern Bypass" and will not be allowed to pass through busy Dhaka roads, giving the roads in the capital a great relief.

The cost of the FAP-8B second phase was calculated to be Tk. 2,300 crore when Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA) did a study in the early 90s. The World Bank also conducted a study on the project terming it 'Eastern Bypass'. But these studies did not consider rail tracks, said sources.

Besides, the project, when completed, will be a blessing for some 20 lakh people in such neighbourhoods as Gulshan, Baridhara, Beraid, Shahjadpur, Basabo, Khilgaon, Goran, Manda, Meradia, Mugda, Madartek and other areas which went under water during the unprecedented flooding this

The Bypass will be built alongside the western bank of the Balu river with an estimated width of 80 feet having separate lanes for road transports, mono-rail service and pavement, the sources said.

Besides, there will be retaining wall, internal canal and at least three pump houses to flash out water from the project area to the river on the other side.

The fresh initiative to move fast with the somewhat forgotten FAP-8B Phase-II began when the President's office asked for a project summary of the Phase-II as the vast neighbourhood fall under this project was reeling under devastating flood in early September. A copy of summary was later forwarded to Prime Minister's Of-

fice as well. An immediate start to excavation work on the Balu was discussed at a high-level meeting held at the prime minister's official residence on September 20. The prime minister asked the authorities to start dredging by the first week of October.

### Sonali Bank

From Page 1 terms and conditions of the FSA for continuing our operation," the chairman has said before leaving for home last week. He said general manager Rabiul Hossain would be with-

drawn from here immediately. "We will have to keep the bank functioning here in accordance with guidelines of the

Farash Uddin added: "If state-owned banks of our neighbouring countries can operate here, why should we not be able to do it with Sonali Bank? he questioned.

He said the bank has already taken harsh steps to recover its outstanding loans of 3 million pounds, most of which are lying with two borrowers in UK.

python uncoiling from a slumber slouching off its old skin. the scourge on the area was visible: A rail track hanging on a hole where it bored its way through the embankment, a rail bridge tossed an tumbled

rice and vegetables without too much effort, was reduced to a wasteland.

fields to the mercy of nature

## People want jobs, not relief: Khaleda

SHARISHABARI, Jamalpur, Sept 22: BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia today expressed grave concern over the sufferings of people and asked the government to gear up relief and income generating activi-ties for the flood affected people. reports UNB.

"People are dying from star-vation, falling ill by taking unwholesome stuff and suffering in the absence of adequate medical care," she said addressing wayside meetings while distributing relief materials. Leader of the opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad told the

launch a movement against the government if it failed to protect the interest of the farmers. Begum Zia criticised the government saying, "It has sanctioned only Tk 25 crore for post-flood rehabilitation." She demanded at least Tk 3000

gatherings that her party would

farmers. She also demanded proper rehabilitation of flood affected people, reconstruction of their houses, fresh interest-free loans and free agri-inputs, including seeds for farmers

crore for rehabilitation of

Begum Zia said people don't want relief. They are jobless for last two months. They want work.

She demanded immediate launching of food-for-work and test relief in addition to vulnerable group feeding programme.

"The distressed people of rural areas will stream to towns and cities if they are not provided food and work. That will pose a danger," she warned. The BNP Chairperson was critical of the government for

its failure to forewarn the people of the impending danger of the flood. She accused the government of misappropriating relief materials collected at home and donated by foreign countries and international

Begum Zia also blamed the government for its failure to make a proper assessment of the damages wrought by the flood. Statistics of one ministry widely differed from the other.

The opposition leader said

her party wanted to cooperate with the government in relief work. "They didn't respond. But we are always with you.' BNP leader Abdus Salam Talukdar accompanied Begum Zia during the visit to the flood

affected areas. The BNP chief is scheduled to visit flood affected areas of Mirzapur tomorrow.

# FBCCI election

From Page 1

election has drawn top politicians and power brokers into the fray. But this year, in a departure from tradition, much of the electioneering has taken place behind the scenes, which allowed a group of known defaulters to take an "active and manipulative" role, the sources

which has given him an edge over Kazi Shafiqul Islam who is known to have manoeuvred for the last two years to prepare for the elections. According to highly placed sources, intervention from top

ruling party leaders and costly

"inducements" have worked on the incumbent vice president to give in. Several sources confirmed that a Ganobhaban meeting in presence of the prime minister on Monday discussed the election. The key players in the "process of selection" who took part in the meeting sought to

to the sources, she did neither support Mintoo nor Islam. However, backing from some ruling party stalwarts including a senior minister and two top city Awami League leaders

Mintoo is also learnt to have agreed to compensate Shafiqul Islam in return for his with-

reaching agreement on all posts of the 32-member executive committee will be a far cry. Meanwhile, the process of selecting the candidates has

pirants who are being persuaded to withdraw. A total of 51 candidates are in the race for 15 posts of executive committee members from the Association Group, which

have the vice president, for which as many as five are in the Each group elects the presi-

dent alternatively, but can have 15 members on the executive committee.

group of business leaders "It will be difficult to choose

35 vying to become EC members had already deposited their let-Union Cabinet

#### recommends President's rule in Bihar

PATNA, Sept 22: Bihar administration today sounded red alert across the state following the union cabinet's recommendation for the imposition of president's rule, reports PTI.

Meanwhile, ruling RJD called a state-wide bandh tomorrow in protests against the Talking to reporters, director general of police KA Jacob said all the police stations had

maintain law and order. He said the state home department had already approached the centre to provide 25 additional companies of paramilitary forces to tackle the situation.

ters of withdrawal with Yussuf Abdullah Harun, the outgoing president. And two of the five vice-presidential nominees

Harun was seen busy all day meeting various groups, reportedly trying to mend fences. Asked he, however, denied having any "formal" meeting on the issue. He also denied having accepted withdrawal letters from the contestants. In another development

Mohammad Ali, a Narayanganj businessman who is reported to have defaulted in repaying bank loans worth more than Tk 100 crore, has convened a meeting of candidates today to drum up support for a consensus team. Ali is alleged to have been a part of the group of defaulters which is active in promoting

'consensus". Meanwhile, at least two writ petitions may be filed soon by candidates who allege voter list

manipulation. A resigning member of the election board may also go to. court to complain violation of election rules, which were changed drastically this year to prevent manipulation and loan

defaulters from participating. The new set of rules also sought to stop expensive campaigning by candidates. But deals, allegedly being struck to woo contenders out of the race. may outweigh expenses in previous elections, the sources

### 31 dists

From Page 1 still flowing above the danger

levels. Of the swollen rivers, the Shitalakhya at Narayanganj was still flowing 18 cm above the danger level after receding by 12 cm while the Turag receded by 15 cm and 14 cm at Mirpur and Tongi respectively, but were still flowing 39 cm

above the red mark at the twopoints. The Mahananda at Chapainawabganj was flowing two cm above its danger mark while the Meghna at Bhairab Bazar was 32 cm above the danger

The centre also forecast that the flood situation of the Brahmaputra, Ganges and Meghna basins as a whole will improve further in the next 24 hours starting yesterday while the situation in the central part of the country will also con-

tinue to improve. The water level of the rivers in and around the capital will be receding further.

## Piles of garbage

From Page 1 rubbish from the road but nothing happened," said Nasiruddin Bhuiyan, owner of a hardware

shop. Local businessmen said they had bought bleaching powder and spread it over the pile of sludge to prevent diseases from spreading.

At Chandnighat, the roadside rubbish disposal point was overflowing at the Water Works Road. About twenty feet of the road and its adjacent area were covered with all sorts of rotten garbage. Polluted water poured out of an underground drain at the same spot.

Mainuddin, an attendant of

a nearby pharmacy, said the underground drain had been leaking for a long time. "I think polythene bags have blocked the passage," he said. Near WASA's Chandnighat pump station the entire area

remained wet and filthy. Thousands of polythene bags rot in the polluted water. Nearby, an aluminium factory remained shut. Local people said during the two-month long flooding all machinery of the factory were rendered useless.

#### A battle against nature need fodders. I can survive From Page 1

precious transplants but also left him and his neighbours tottering on the brink. Now Ahsan Ali has come

back with four farm hands and

bunches of Alai that he had bought at a premium. "I do not know if I would have the full yield", he told a group of journalists visiting the area to see the extent of Brahmaputra's fury on its eastern banks in Jamalpur and Sarishabari

of rice if it grows overcoming many more enemies nature has kept in store for farmers like him who had gone on replantation in Jamalpur and parts of Mymensingh. As the flood water receded

He said he would probably

six-member family. get some three to four maunds

after the nearly three-month long deluge, the farmers went back to the field to retrieve whatever they could. Some simply put in their seedlings that survived the onslaught of heavy rains. "It is

better than nothing. If there is

no yield the paddy could still be

good enough for the cattle. They

somehow on atta (flour) but the cattle would have anything as they too had a tough time," Ali He had already sold one of

the two cattles that he used to

prepare the field to meet the needs under siege by the floods. The bull could have fetched me Tk 7,000 at normal times." But the distressed sale brought him only Tk 4,000. Of the capital, Tk 1,000 went for the replantation and the rest to meet expenses for his

ing me, providing seeds or food," he said. "There had been some help in his village. But those went to the cronies of the local union parishad leaders. Only the fat cats got fetter." But Ali and efforts of others who have replanted their crops may face more threats from nature. There could be stem borer. hispa or brown grasshoppers

attacking the crops at various

stages, said Hafizur Rahman

Bacchu, a Novartis dealer sell-

ing various agro-chemicals at

There had been no one help-

Kendua bazar. Sipping tea in his shop, Bacetly but still hissing as it rolled back to its old course." As it went back, like a

like a toy on another section.

The huge wasteland had shrunk the income of Bacchu. "From Tk 200,000 a month my sale has dropped to Tk 20,000 because few are venturing to use fertiliser or insecticides. Nor-

### chu said the Brahmaputra had retreated a week ago. "We could still see the river, flowing qui-

The ravaged fields of farmers, where its rich alluvial deposits had normally yielded

mally they would have bought doses of insecticides to save the crop from pest attack. What they are doing is leaving the trying to get whatever they could without much investment," he said.

### were learnt to have handed their letters to Harun.

A number of top ministers are reportedly backing Mintoo,

convince the prime minister in favour of Mintoo but, according

strengthened Mintoo's posi-

drawal from the race. But, in all probability,

raised questions among the as-

has this year its turn to elect the president The Chamber Group will

The outgoing president who is also the ex-officio chief of the so-called Council of Chambers. a forum of heads of all chambers, was "assigned to choose the consensus candidates" by a

the Association Group) even if they have reached an agreement on president," said a business leader opposing the move. Business sources said some 34 Chamber candidates out of

15 members from over 50 (from

been put on 'Maximum alert'. and additional companies of para-military forces were being rushed to different places to