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Kibria opens NY office of Sonali Exchange

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Floods marred chances of hitting almost 7pc growth

Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria said the country's economy was moving fast and had it been spared from recent floods, economic growth this year would have been close to seven per cent, reports APB.

Addressing the opening ceremony of the sixth branch of Sonali Exchange in Astoria, New York, on Friday, he pointed out that the country had made a significant progress in the industrial sector as well as in export during the last two years.

"Growth rate was nearly six per cent, inflation was low and growths of industrial output and exports was the region's highest during the period," the minister asserted.

Kibria told the function that the government had decided to float a US dollar and UK pounddenominated Industrial Bond and that the expatriate Bangladeshis would be given preference when it would be launched.

The finance minister expatriate praised Bangladeshis for their contribution to Bangladesh's development and directed Sonali Exchange to provide them with the best possible service, according to a message received in the city vesterday.

He reiterated that the present government is determined to improve the efficiency of financial institutions and instill discipline in the banking sec-

Earlier, referring to the extent of devastation caused by an unprecedented flood the minister said Bangladesh has started smarting from the debilitating effects of the flood under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

He mentioned that a UN assessment team had termed as "exemplary" the government's flood disaster management, especially of supply of food and other essentials

Government's relief distribution is 'above political influence and free from corruption," Kibria said.

Outlining the relief and rehabilitation steps, the minister said the government had given special emphasis on agriculture rehabilitation and informed

BCL activists From Page 1

As the BCL president was about to announce the new committee, armed-men backed by Ratan, a "non-student" student leader of BCL, brandished firearms to refrain the president from going ahead. They also tried to snatch the mouthpiece from the president, witnesses said.

The BCL president, however, declared a three-member committee with Bashir, Mamun and Rahim as president, general secretary and organising secretary respectively.

The supporters of Ratan then ransacked the auditorium, the venue of the council. They damaged some furniture, flower tubs and windowpanes of the hall. BCL council meetings for DU

hall units began on September 30 and are scheduled to complete by October 11.

Meanwhile, the Council of the DU and the central committees will be held on October 14 and on October 22 respectively.

that a Tk 3270 crore agri-credit programme had been adopted.

"The government took timely steps ensuring that Bangladesh's industries do not suffer a serious setback owing to the floods," he observed, saying that special ferry service and airlifting were made to help exporters meet deadlines.

Whip Abdus Shahid MP. Jinnatul Firdaus MP, Bangladesh Ambassador to the US K M Shehabuddin and Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to the UN Anwarul Karim Chowdhury were present.

Later in the afternoon, the Finance Minister addressed a gathering of some potential investors at the Bangladesh Consulate General in New York. He told the investors that

Bangladesh has emerged as one of the most attractive destinations for investment, and the country's greatest resource is her people. "It is a country of culturally

linguistically and ethnically homogenous people," Kibria said, adding that Bangladesh is very liberal towards foreign investment and that it is ready for investment.

Responding to a question, the Finance Minister said Bangladesh offered one of the highest rates of return on investment and invited the potential investors to avail the opportunities on offer.

Upendra Chakma From Page 1

land dispute, unemployment and backwardness in the com-

munication sector." The former tribal MP said as many as 1,600 tribal families, who returned from the refugee camps in India, are still facing land-related disputes in the

These disputes could not settled as the proposed Land Commission is yet to be established, he said.

He complained that the returnees of the first two batches are yet to receive their money for buying cattle as per the 20point package deal under which they returned.

They have been informed that the matter is under consideration of the Ministry of CHT

Affairs, he said. UL Chakma further complained that the seniority of the tribal servicemen, who returned home under the deal, is yet to be

Besides, 40 families, who received verdict in their favour about the disputed lands, have not yet got possession of those

Some of the returnee families are still staying at the Dighinala reception camps and passing their days in misery, he

Replying to a question, he said the leaders of his organisation had committed to the returnees that they would play a due role in resolving their prob-

"We could only do that partially," commented the elderly tribal leader.

He called upon all the parties involved in the CHT to practise restraint and emphasised on united efforts of all the political and social leadership of the region in achieving permanent peace in the Hill Tracts.

BATEXPO: Spot order

From Page fair as against US\$ 35 million last year. The four-billion-dollar export-oriented garment industry earns about 70 per cent of the country's foreign exchange and that the business is increasing at 20 per cent a year. "If (30 per cent) quota is

given, our revenue will increase by US\$ 1.30 to US\$ 1.40 billion a year in the American market," Quddus said. BGMEA's lobbyist in the US.

former Representative Steve Solarz, was reported to have "tried his best" to convince the administration to increase the "Clinton was supposed to de-

clare the quota enhancement during his proposed visit here." Quddus claimed. Garment factories began

sending their child workers -aged below 14 - to 300 schools in accordance with an MOU involving ILO, UNICEF and the BGMEA in 1994.

About 8,000 young workers were taking lessons in those schools while many of them went for secondary education under an "earn and learn" programme.

Board of Investment executive chairman Farooq Sobhan. also present at the meeting, said Bangladesh should establish sufficient backward linkage industries to help sustain the RMG industry after the complete elimination of quota system in 2005.

"Setting up backward linkage industries should be our

address: dstar@bangla.net

number one priority," Sobhan said adding Bangladesh needed to speed up its activities in ports and remove bottlenecks that hinder foreign and domestic investment

A US buyer, Peter Singh, told the journalists that Bangladeshi textile products were most competitive and of good quality. "And also, Bangladeshi exporters were serious about their business commitments.

Singh said he had started business with Bangladesh in 1985 and raised his imports to US\$ 50 million from mere one

BGMEA vice president Nurul Huq Sikder said Bangladesh and other least developing countries required an extension of the phasing out of Multi-fibre Agreement (MFA) by 5-10 years to prepare themselves to com-

"It is proved that the LDCs will not able to compete in a free market within next 5-7 years," he said explaining a recent incident where Canada withdrew quota system of a particular item and that about 50 per cent exports were occupied by China alone.

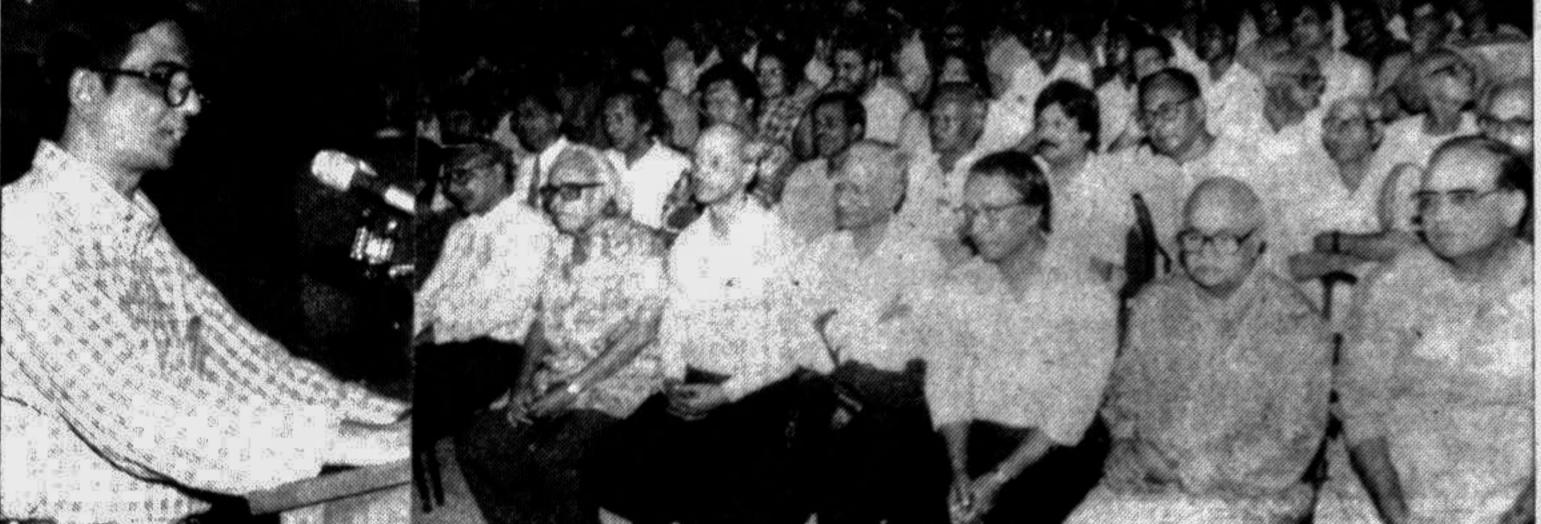
"We have asked foreign ministry and Commerce ministry to negotiate the issue of extending MFA phasing out."

BGMEA president said there would be a ready stock of garment and apparel items for the buyers in the fair. These products got stuck due to shipment failure and other reasons.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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Editor Matiur Rahman speaks at a pre-launch ceremony yesterday, promising to bring to light the facts of life and society, however bitter and unpleasant they may be, through the pages of the Prothom Alo. -Star Photo

Drama festival to raise funds for flood victims

By Staff Correspondent A 10-day drama festival aimed at raising funds for postflood rehabilitation work, began at the Mahila Samity audi-

torium in the city yesterday. Ten plays will be staged at the festival, organised by Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation (BGTF).

Explaining the rationale of the festival, noted actress Sara Zaker said, "As theatre activists, it is our responsibility and commitment to stand by the flood victims with all our strength." She said, BGTF had earlier arranged an eight-day festival in August to help the flood victims. She also urged all to help

create awareness among people of the affect of indiscriminate dumping of polythene bags on the environment BGTF President Nasiruddin

Yousuf said they expect to raise about Tk two lakh from the festival which would be spent for rehabilitation work of the flood victims. Vice President of Zonta Club

IV. Dhaka, later handed over a cheque for Tk 50,000 to the BGTF president to help expedite the BGTF rehabilitation programme. Among others, theatre per-

sonality Ramendu Mojumder. Alv Zaker, Khaleda Khan, Mamunur Rashid and Sammilito Sangskriti Jote secretary Golam Quddus were present on the occasion. The plays scheduled to be

staged in the festival are Khamakha Khamakha of Theatre Arambag. Dewan Gazir Kissa of Nagorik Nattya Samprodaya, Meherjan Arekbar of Theatre Bailey Road, Khandani Kissa of Subachan Nattya Sangsad, Jai Jayanti of Arannyak Nattyadal, Ghum Nei of Mahakal Nattya Sampradaya. Shamukbaash of Theatre Centre. Bishad Sindhu of Dhaka Padatik, Merchant of Venice of Dhaka Theatre and Kanjush of Lokanattyadal Siddheshwari.

From Page 1

investigation and therefore no further remand required for the three accused.

"We have already verified and cross-checked the evidences and information in connection with the case, and the involvement of the arrested accused in plotting the killing of four national leaders has been proved beyond doubt," he

The official said the confessional statement of the three was not essential for establish-

ing the case. Hannan said they were expecting to submit the charge sheet of the Jail Killing Case within October 15 on completion of the investigation process and added that some 50 to 60 witnesses would testify in the court on behalf of the prose-

cution. CID officials said they earlier arrested five other persons under the Jail Killing Case and haunting for another 14 ac-

Most of the accused in the iail killing were also involved in the Bangabandhu Murder Case, they added.

Investigation into the killing of four national leaders was revived by the present government in June 1996.

BNP MPs From Page 1

venge and annihilate the opposition when it became isolated from the people. But, they warned, the people

will never forgive the conspira-The signatories to the state-

ment included Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, Saifur Rahman, Abdul Mannan Bhuivan. Oli Ahmed, Khondoker Delwar Hossain, Khondoker Mosharraf Hossain, Shaikh Razzak Ali, Akbar Hossain, Nazmul Huda, Shamsul Islam, Chowdhury Kamal-Ibne-Yusuf. MK Anwar and Zamiruddin Sircar.

Juicy details

From Page 1 tial testimony or reading the

report. The company based its figure on an average employee cost of 35 dollars per hour. That figure dwarfs the estimated cost of 45 million dollars for Kenneth Starr's investigation into various scandals sur-

rounding President Clinton.

Pre-launch programme

Promoters of Prothom Alo pledge to project truth

By Staff Correspondent

Members of the civil society vesterday welcomed the proposed launch of a new Bengali daily newspaper, whose promoters and editors pledged to uphold high standards of journalism and remain independent and non-partisan. Prothom Alo or the first

light in Bengali is expected to hit newsstands shortly. Bangladesh needs a newspaper to respond to the hopes and aspirations of a people that has been facing enormous challenges of development and ar-

resting social degeneration. they said. At the same time, as the message from a host of guests from many different backgrounds went, the country requires a newspaper which is sufficiently modern in its out look to deal with the realities of

The pre-launch programme. held at CA Bhavan Auditorium. drew a galaxy of personalities from different professions including professors, writers, business leaders, journalists, columnists, sportsmen and performing artistes. Matiur Rahman, editor of

the 21st century.

the forthcoming newspaper, assured all of a fully independent non-partisan voice that would speak the truth and for the rights of the ordinary citizens "Truth, regardless of the obstacles, shall prevail," he said "People of Bangladesh want a

completely non-partisan and

independent newspaper which

is committed to revealing the

true state of the society. Mahfuz Anam, the paper's publisher, told the gathering that bold journalism and patri otism would be the two cardinal principles guiding the new pub-

Anam, also editor and publisher of The Daily Star, reiterated that the Bengali newspaper would also adhere to the highest standards of journalism and

of the institution of editor. Latifur Rahman, the sponsor, hoped that publication of the Prothom Alo would be a landmark in Bangladesh journalism.

ensure complete independence

Among the luminaries who graced the occasion was the head of the Caretaker Government in 1996 and former chief ustice. Muhammad Habibur Rahman.

Those who spoke briefly welcoming the new venture included: poet Shamsur Rahman, Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui. Prof Maniruzzaman Mian, Prof Anisuzzaman, former finance minister AMA Muhith, Bangla Academy chief Syed Anwar Hussain, former civil servants Faruq Ahmad Chowdhury and Mujibul Haq, writer Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, journalist ABM Musa, artist Qaiyum Chowdhury, former national footballer Zakaria Pintu, dramatist Aly Zaker, NGO activist Rasheda K Chowdhury. magician Jewel Aich, entertainer Hanif Sanket and singer Samina Chowdhury.

Prof Anisur Rahman. economist and a former member of the Planning Commission, rendered a song.

Noted actor Asaduzzaman Noor recited from the preface to Nuroldeener Sarajibon to the applause of the packed audi-

Nilufar Yasmin, Dolly Saivantoni. Rabi Chowdhury Alyub Bachchu and Maqsud were among others who sang.

Some surprising moves towards global peace

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 3 With a global economic crisis looming and conflicts creating turmoil in more than 30 hotspots, world leaders came to the United Nations over the past two weeks - and made some surprising moves towards easing global tensions, reports

After detonating nuclear devices in May, India and Pakistan announced plans to adhere to the nuclear test ban treaty within the next year, which would slow the south Asian arms race.

Benjamin Netanyahu announced Israel will shortly hand over 13 per cent of the West Bank to the Palestinians, and Yasser Arafat backed down from unilaterally declaring that a Palestinian state would be in place by May 4, 1999, the deadline for implementing the Middle East peace accords.

Iran's moderate government distanced itself from a dirs 2.5 million reward for killing Salman Rushdie, author of 'The Satanic verses' which religious leaders claimed blasphemed Islam, prompting a positive response from Western Ministers. Nigeria's new leader, Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar, committed his military government civilian rule next year, key

Western demands to end the country's pariah status. Still, many of the world's conflicts showed no signs of

cooling down.

There was no progress on reunification of Cyprus. The border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea remained tense. Congo accused neighbouring Rwanda and Uganda of invading the country and massacring thousands of innocent Congolese. Rwanda and Uganda denied the allegations and blamed Congo for slaughtering innocent men, women and children.

And the threat of NATO military strikes against Serb targets in Kosovo grew, following the broadcast and publication of gruesome pictures of massacred ethnic Albanians. Survivors blamed Serb forces trying to crush independence seeking ethnic Albanians.

The UN Security Council on Thursday condemned the massacres, but didn't assign blame or add any new legal backing for any NATO action.

Yugoslav Foreign Minister Zivadin Jovanovic denied any new attacks in Kosovo and insisted his country wanted "direct, unconditional" dialogue with the ethnic Albanians to fair elections and a return to —which they have rejected to resolve and conflict peacefully.

BNP calls hartal in Faridpur today

FARIDPUR, Oct 3: The BNP has called a half-day hartal in the district tomorrow protesting arrest of three opposition leaders, including KM Obaidur Rahman MP, reports UNB. The hartal call was an-

nounced from a procession brought out in the town today defying Section 144. The district BNP leaders had

called a public meeting at the same venue at the same time. Fearing troubles, the administration today imposed Sec-

tion 144 on the town. Failing to hold the public meeting, BNP leaders and activists brought out processions in some areas of the town. They chanted anti-government slogans and demanded immediate release of Obaidur Rahman and others.

Bombs and crackers were exploded in different parts of the town this evening.

5 dacoits held at Ctg: Looted goods recovered

cial team of Kotwali police recovered looted goods and gold ornaments, and arrested five dacoits just after two hours of dacoity, reports BSS.

from the house of a businessman. Mozaffar Ahmed at 3 am at Yakubnagar today, the press release added.

manhunt.

On the basis of their confession, police later recovered

Capital's direct rail link with

JAMALPUR, Oct 3: Direct

The communication was disrupted when a bridge at Patharghata on Jamalpur-Bahadurabad route collapsed on Wednesday.

3 am today after the repairing of the bridge. Ekota Express, which had been stranded at Dewanganj since Wednesday, resumed its journey for Dhaka soon after.

Pakistan unhappy over postponement of Clinton's visit

istan said today it was 'disappointed' at the postponement of US President Bill Clinton's planned November trip to South Asia following the nuclear tests by Islamabad and New Delhi, reports AFP.

earlier called a public meeting this afternoon at Janata Bank square to protest the arrest of Obaid who hails from Faridpur. Ruling Awami League also

CHITTAGONG, Oct 3: A spe-

The dacoits at gun point looted goods and ornaments

According to a police press release, a police team arrested Safi Alam. Abul Bashar, Mohammad Farook. Deeder and Abdul Khaleque from different parts of the city after a massive

looted goods and gold orna-ments worth about Tk 1,50,000.

northern dists restored

rail communications between Dhaka and northern districts has been restored today after two days of suspension, report agencies.

The train service resumed at

ISLAMABAD, Oct 3: Pak-

PM: Purchase land, if needed

From Page 1

The court premises was swarmed with people while thousands were waiting on boats, trawlers and cargo ships to listen and have a look at Hasina who is the first prime minister to visit the area. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mu-

jibur Rahman visited Mithamon in 1970. Since then no head of the state or government have gone there. Mithamon, a haor area of the district, is still under water. Before addressing the people, the prime minister distributed

relief goods among the flood victims. She also distributed seedlings and fertiliser to the affected farmers. She released fish fries in the thana complex pond and planted a sapling at Tomija Khatun Girls High LGRD and Cooperatives Min-

ister Zillur Rahman, Deputy

Speaker Advocate Abdul

Hamid, Law Minister Abdul

Matin Khasru, thana AL president Roisuddin Ahmed and Chhatra League organising secretary Ajoy Kor Khokan also addressed the meeting. From Mithamon, the prime

minister went to Nasirnagar thana in Brahmanbaria district where she addressed the flood victims and distributed relief among them. Addressing a public meeting at Nasirnagar, the Prime Min-

ister said the government is doing everything to send foods to the remote areas for saving the people's lives and also taking up steps to repair the damaged communication infrastructure. "We have a plan to connect country's every union with thana and the thana with the district headquarters," she said, lands.

14,000 kilometres of road across the country. She said with limited resources, the government has

adding, to build up the network

the government will construct

been trying heart and soul to remove the sufferings of the people to repair the losses of the severest flood in the country's history. "Now all of us will have to work together, work more to recoup the aftermath of the floods," she said calling upon all to go for massive cultivation and production. "Not a single inch of land should be kept barren. Plant

ever it is possible," she called upon the people. The prime minister said to reduce the repeated flood devastation the government, as a long term measure, has decided to dredge the rivers to increase their navigability, and build houses and institution on high

tree and cultivate crops wher-

Presided over by thana AL president Dr Raffuddin, the meeting was also addressed by LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman and Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru.

Australian PM clings narrowly to power

SYDNEY, Oct 3: Australian Prime Minister John Howard clung narrowly to power today after an early election called to push through radical tax reforms, reports Reuters.

The conservative leader, elected by a landslide 31 months ago, saw off a resurgent Labour opposition and Pauline Hanson's populist One Nation Party to earn his coalition a majority of around six seats in the 148-seat lower house. In his victory speech,

Howard pledged to fight for real aboriginal reconciliation by the time Australia celebrates the centenary of nationhood in 2001 and claimed a mandate for his plan to introduce a consumption tax and cut personal income taxes.

"This is probably the first time in the recent experience of western political parties that a party has successfully won an election championing such a major reform that so readily

City experiences heavy shower

The city yesterday experienced heavy shower, influenced by the 'trough' of the low that formed over the west-central Bay and adjoining Andhra coast.

Met Office Director Mo-

hammad Ershad Hossain told APB last night that the trough or area of low pressure, extended upto the coasts, was causing moisture incursion into the country, particularly in the coastal belt "Due to heating, this moisture goes up and forms convec-

tive cloud which ultimately

falls as rain," he said, adding

that the rain of this kind is

quite normal during the month of October. The localised rain would continue until the monsoon withdraws by middle of this month, he added. It may also occur after the monsoon, but with less intensity and fre-

quency. There would be little above normal rain during this month," he said predicting that the rain, which swamped many streets in the capital, would be beneficial to the late Aman crop now being sown.

India, Pakistan expel each other's diplomats ISLAMABAD, Oct 3: In a tit

for-tat move, Pakistan and India have expelled each other's diplomats, declaring them persona non grata and trading charges of espionage, diplomatic sources disclosed today, reports Xinhua.

The Indian government on Tuesday first ordered a senior diplomat at the Pakistani high commission in New Delhi to leave the country within one week, charging him with espionage, the source said.

The name of the Pakistani official, however, was not given. In a usual tit-for-tat response, Pakistan ordered an Indian embassy official at Is-

lamabad to leave the country within one week. The Indian diplomat was also charged with activities incompatible with his diplomatic

According to a report by the News Network International the Pakistani Foreign Office spokesman. Tariq Altaf. did not deny the development when contacted, saying, "such things do happen in view of the state of relations between the two

countries. The sources further said both countries had agreed not to disclose the incident before the forthcoming foreign secretary level talks scheduled to resume in Islamabad on October 15.

Ship detained

From Page 1 thorities then detained the

Officials suspected that the missing damaged rice might have been sold out from the ves-

Port sources said destruction of damaged foodgrains began on October 1 in presence of army personnel. So far, 4,596.5 tonnes of rice and 10.5 tonnes of sugar were found damaged in eight ships.

WFP wheat

tion this week, delivering wheat and rice to about 4 million destitute families across the coun-The food will be distributed

From Page 1

through the government's Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) system. Families selected by local committees as most needy will receive ration cards which entitle them to 16 kgs of grains each for the month of October. WFP field monitors, local

elected officials and NGOs will ensure that the correct amount of food is going to those with VGF cards. It is expected that the programme will continue through

the end of the year, when food aid will then be dedicated to supporting rehabilitation through food for work projects.

Let's make things better

PHILIPS

lent itself to a dishonest fear campaign," he said of the tax

Labour had come close to

creating an historic upset with its assault on Howard's planned goods and services tax or GST. Labour leader Kim Beazley refused to formally concede defeat, but told supporters in the western Australian city of Perth: "the government has a mandate to govern well, but you

can expect an opposition that will keep a government honest." With around 80 per cent of the primary vote counted. Australian Broadcasting Corp tele-vision predicted that Howard's coalition would get at least 77 seats in the 148-seat lower

But the projections also

showed Labour had won more votes than the coalition - 41 per cent to 39 per cent of primary votes and 51.5 to 48.5 after distributing preferences. The coalition's skillful targeting of marginal constituencies meant Labour looks to have

fallen around seven seats short

of the 27 new seats it needed to

make Howard Australia's first one-term prime minister since the great depression. Hanson's One Nation won 8.4 per cent of the votes on its national election debut after fighting on an anti-immigration, protectionist platform. One nation did best in Hanson's home state of Queensland, where it captured some 16 per

cent of votes. But just three months after One Nation's stunning electoral debut in the Queensland state election, Hanson looked set to lose her seat in the Brisbane suburbs and her close adviser David Oldfield unlikely to grab a Senate seat in New South Wales.

"One Nation is not going to

fade away." Hanson told a group

of supporters. "We have woken

up a lot of Australians, inform-

ing them of what is actually happening in Australia." Hanson's defeat was welcomed by Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer, whose National Party has borne the brunt of One Nation's success with alienated voters in the

Prodhan held From Page 1 arrested on Tuesday in connection with the jail killing case of

November 4, 1975.

The processionists also raised slogans against the government's role in relief distribution and demanded that the task should be handed over to the army, police said. UNB adds: BNP-led 7-party

alliance yesterday strongly

condemned the police attack on

Jagpa procession and arrest of

its president and supporters. In a joint statement, the alliance leaders said that the democratic practice is now at a stake because of terrorism let loose by the government and Awami League. The police attack on the pro-

adding it is trying to revert to one-party rule to put an end to the existence of opposition par-

cession has proved that Awami

League just talks of democracy.

it never believes in it, they said

Discord

From Page phone. CMP Commissioner Kutubur Rahman said, "We have supplied all materials to the deputy commissioner for issuing detention order against that arrested terrorist leader. But the detention order is yet to be

He added, "If there is such type of delay in issuing detention order as per our proposals. it will help the arrested terrorists get easy release from cus-

issued, keeping the issue hang-

Despite repeated attempts, the DC could not be contacted for his comments.

Clinton From Page 1

forts to lure Monica Lewinsky into making incriminating statements about President Bill Clinton and grand jury testimony by more than two dozen Secret Service agents and officers who passed along to investigators the rumors they had

fair about to explode in the news media last January, Jordan was on the telephone two dozen times with Clinton or presidential aides in a span of less than 12 hours. Jordan said he didn't recall

what he and the president

With the Lewinsky sexual af-

talked about The seriousness of the brewing scandal was evident to a few of Clinton's inner circle, including Jordan and presidential adviser Bruce Lindsey. Alerted to the Lewinsky

problem, Jordan told Lindsey

the president should settle

Paula Jones' sexual harassment

lawsuit, even offering at one point to raise the money him-Jordan "indicated that if it was a matter of trying to

raise, you know whatever the money was that would be required to settle it, that he thought he could raise" it, Lindsey recounted of the effort in mid-January.