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VOL. VIII NO. 294 REGD. NO. DA 781 INTERNET: http://www.dailystarnews.com AGRAHAYAN 3, 1405 BS DHAKA TUESDAY NOVEMBER 17, 1998 RAJAB 26, 1419 HIJRI 16 PAGES: PRICE TAKA 6.00

UN teams heading back to Baghdad

BAGHDAD, Nov 16: About 150 UN relief workers who had been evacuated to Jordan in fear of US missile strikes were heading back to Baghdad today and the arms inspectors at the crest of the crisis were ready to test Baghdad's pledge to cooperate, reports AP.

Caroline Cross, spokeswoman for the UN Special Commission, which oversees weapons inspections, said UNSCOM teams would return to the Iraqi capital from Bahrain tomorrow to resume their search for Iraq's forbidden weapons.

"We will get up and running as soon as we reach Baghdad," Ms Cross told reporters in the Bahraini capital Manama.

She said the inspectors hoped for full cooperation as pledged in an Iraqi letter Saturday that ended the confrontation just before the United States and Britain were to strike Iraq to force renewed cooperation with the arms inspections.

JCD calls hartal at Sylhet today

From Staff Correspondent
SYLHET, Nov 16: An 8-hour hartal in Sylhet town called by the Jatiyatibadi Chhatra Dal, is scheduled to begin tomorrow morning.

The hartal, part of JCD's 4-day programme, was called on November 12 to press its 7-point demands.

The demands include withdrawal of "fake" cases against some JCD activists for their alleged involvement in incidents of violence during the recent 60-hour hartal, release of JCD activists and arrest of Chhatra League activists for the "planned attack" on the peaceful processions of JCD.

About 50 people were injured, 35 bullet-hit, when JCD and BCL activists clashed during the 60-hour hartal, by the Opposition.

VAT waived on export-support services

Responding to a demand from the business community, the government has waived VAT on export-support services like C&F and shipping agents and insurances to stimulate exports and make them more competitive, reports UNB.

Besides, under the waiver, every 100 per cent export-oriented enterprises will be exempted of the value-added tax on two telephones, one telex and one fax, said an official announcement yesterday.

The enterprises entitled to enjoy the facilities have been asked to apply to the VAT Commissioner's office and collect exemption certificates.

Cabinet approves Rajuk to oversee DND project

The Cabinet at a meeting yesterday approved a proposal for handing over the command area of Dhaka-Narayanganj-Demra (DND) irrigation project to Rajuk from the jurisdiction of Water Development Board, reports UNB.

The meeting of the council of ministers was held at the Secretariat with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

The Cabinet also approved the drafts of 'Legal Aid Bill 1998'.

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Formulate policy, set up bio-tech cell

Scientists cry at seminar

By Staff Correspondent

Leading biochemists and biotechnologists of the country want the government to formulate a national policy on biotechnology immediately.

The call came from a round-table meeting co-sponsored by Bangladesh Biochemical Society and The Daily Star, which followed a day-long symposium.

The scientists also recommended setting up of a Biotechnology Cell in the Ministry of Science and Technology and a National Institute of Biotechnology with state of art equipment for providing modern research facilities to the bio-scientists.

In the concluding part of the day-long symposium held at the Department of Bio-technology of Dhaka University, the scientists met at a round table discussion which produced a 10-point recommendation for development in the field of biotechnology.

The recommendations will be placed before the Ministry of Science and Technology for consideration. A task force involving scientists from different fields of biotechnology will be formed to translate the recommendations into reality, they said.

The national policy on biotechnology should be aimed at promoting biotechnology research in Bangladesh and building up a biotechnology infrastructure conducive to the cultivation and nurture of a biotechnology industry, they observed.

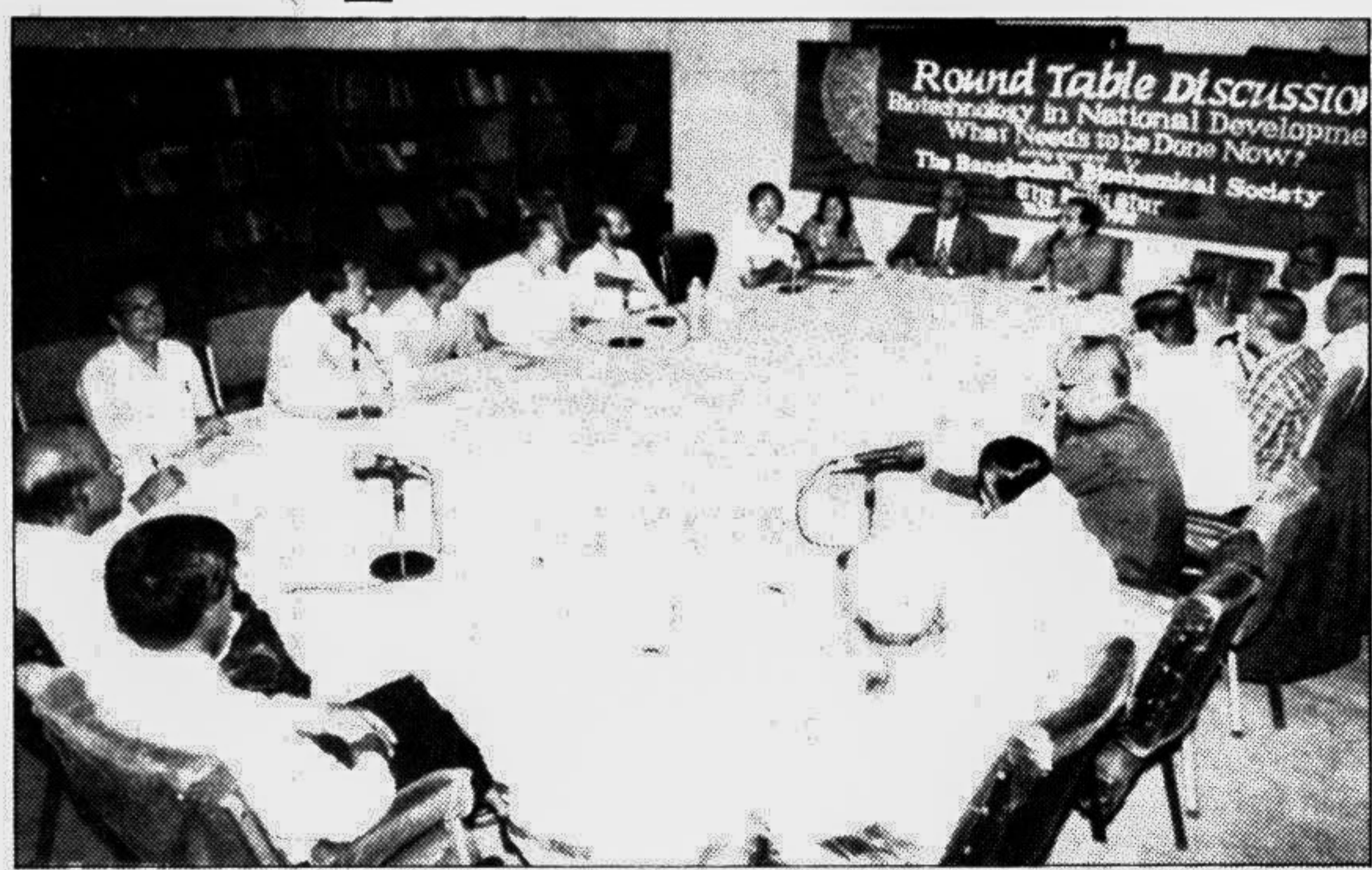
The national policy should take care of issues like development of manpower, economic policies conducive to its development, attracting foreign biotechnology companies to set up operations in Bangladesh, they said.

Creating awareness among Bangladeshis, particularly venture capitalists and entrepreneurs, establishing regulatory authority to deal with patent, bio-safety guidelines should also be addressed in the national policy, they said.

The 10-point recommendations also included:

- Development of well-defined, well-formulated and multi-disciplinary research teams on a selected few national problems.
- Exemption of taxes on equipment and chemicals for research purpose especially biotechnology research and incentives for industrialists to invest in biotechnology, including tax holidays, exemption of duties and taxes on equipment and chemicals, low interest capital loans.
- Government initiated programmes for the transfer of available technology like tissue culture of potato, orchid, banana and other crops to the private sectors, biotechnological

Roundtable on "Biotechnology in National Development" in progress. — Star photo



Roundtable on "Biotechnology in National Development" in progress. — Star photo

Khaleda threatens non-stop hartal

By Staff Correspondent

Opposition leader Khaleda Zia has warned of non-stop hartal until the fall of the government if people "desire" and if the "tyranny on them" goes on.

"It won't be for one, two or three days only, if necessary and if desired by people, non-stop hartal will be enforced to topple the government unless it stops killing and oppressing people," BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia told a public rally at Paltan Maidan in the city yesterday afternoon.

Her hartal threat came only the day after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's unilateral declaration that the ruling party would never call hartal, even when in the opposition.

The rally, attended by several thousand people including some 40 BNP lawmakers, was organised prior to the main opposition party's *padajatra* (march) to the Sangsad Bhaban (parliament building).

The opposition leader claimed the government "forced

us" to resort to the recent hartals. "The 60-hour shutdown proved the people have rejected the government".

"This government talks about democracy but never practises it," she said claiming they were compelled to take to the streets in the face of a "reign of terror" by the people in power.

Khaleda said her party "preferred systematic and disciplined form of agitation like procession, rally and sometimes hartal for national interests".

"But the government-backed terrorists took to the streets to foil our hartal programmes, and it can't be tolerated."

"We found AL terrorists marauding the streets carrying arms, *ramdao* and *kirich*. No action was taken against such terrorists while the innocent opposition activists came under attack from the ruling party and the police as well. This is their style of democracy," she

said.

Under such a situation, she said, her party could not remain silent.

Accusing the government of killing her party workers one after another, the BNP chief said, "I'm not ready to hear any more wailing of mothers losing their children. I want to see smile on their faces."

Referring to her party's November 7 public meeting at the Paltan Maidan, which was foiled halfway due to cracker blasts and teargas shells, Khaleda Zia said BNP had been observing the day glorifying the "people's" revolution that protected the national sovereignty. "But the ruling party backed by police attacked the meeting-bound people and foiled the rally through gunshots, blasts and teargas," she said angrily.

"Police even fired teargas canisters at the podium in an attempt on my life. I narrowly



Leader of the Opposition and BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia addresses a rally at Paltan Maidan in the city yesterday prior to leading a march towards Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban. — Star photo

Cloths imported in the name of garments units flood markets

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Nov 16: Dumping of foreign cloths worth crores of taka imported in the name of some garment factories continued unabated in the local markets, threatening locally produced textiles, sources said.

Some racketeers are engaged in the illegal business in collusion with some high officials of Chittagong Customs House and the port jety, the sources said.

Even foreign cloths imported under back to back LC against non-operating garment factories are being sold straight in wholesale markets in the port city and to businessmen from Islampur in Dhaka.

Some C&F agents allegedly clear such consignments under a 'package deal' with Customs officials. Proper checking is hardly done as large sums of 'speed money' are paid under the 'package deal'.

Higher amount of 'speed money' is realised if any false

declaration of imported cloths like suiting instead of shirting or import against non-operating garments factory is detected, the source said.

Recently, Customs officials were forced to seize such cloths worth Taka five crore on orders from higher authorities in Dhaka as intelligence agencies found the garment factories non-operating.

Earlier, another consignment of over 50,000 yards of cloth, imported by the same factories were allegedly sold at Islampur market in Dhaka, the sources said.

Talking to this correspondent, Commissioner of Chittagong Customs House Abul Kasem said, "It is a sort of 'system loss' and we are taking all preventive measures to check the menace".

UNB adds: A probe body suggested the authorities to take legal actions against 23 garment industries for selling duty-free cloths in open market.

According to the findings of the five-member inquiry committee of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) the owners of the factories had sold out clothes worth about Tk 200 crore in last two years.

Garment industries import fabrics free of duties for stitching to export apparel.

Of the incriminated industries, 7 are in Chittagong, 8 in Dhaka and 8 in Narayanganj.

Meanwhile, the Customs authorities here stopped the delivery process of fabrics and other raw materials of 200 consignees on charge of violating section 45 of the Customs Act.

A group of Clearing and Forwarding Agents stopped their activities at the Chittagong Customs House today in protest.

An official of the customs house told UNB that the importers "changed their names in the consignment letters breaking the Customs law".

BNP memo to Speaker

By Staff Correspondent

Thousands of major opposition party activists including those of BNP yesterday staged separate marches towards the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban and submitted memoranda to the Speaker protesting among other issues a "deteriorating" law and order and price hike of essentials.

BNP and its allies in the seven-party combine staged their marches amid huge deployments of riot and armed police.

Leader of the Opposition and BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia led her party's marchers who include some 40 MPs of the party from the city's Paltan Maidan while the march by Jamaat-e-Islami, having three MPs, began from the Maghbazar crossing, Kazi Zafar Ahmed-led faction of the Jatiya Party started its march from the Muktangan ground near GPO while some other smaller parties in the alliance from their respective offices in the city.

Started at almost the same time -- around 5 in the afternoon -- processions of all the parties were stopped at the

President tells memorial meet Mushtaque staged jail killing

By Staff Correspondent

President Shahabuddin Ahmed yesterday condemned the killing of four national leaders in jail, saying that it was a "black chapter" in national life and a hated incident in human history, reports UNB.

"Establishment of rule of law and forward march of democracy in the country were interrupted by this dastardly killing," he said addressing a memorial meeting at the National Museum auditorium in the afternoon.

Jatiya Char Neta Parishad (Council of four national leaders) organised the meeting, marking the Jail Killing Day.

On November 3, 1975, four national leaders — Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, Capt. Monsur Ali and A H M Quamruzzaman — were brutally killed in Dhaka Central Jail.

Presided over by Parishad president Dr Mazharul Islam, the meeting was also addressed by Syeda Zohra Tajuddin, Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak, Telecommunications

and Works Minister Mohammad Nasim, Prime Minister's Political Adviser Dr S A Malek, Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor Pran A K Azad Chowdhury, Syed Badruddin Hossain and Syed Ashraful Islam.

President Shahabuddin said unfortunately, the four leaders had lost their lives in the jail at the directive of their long-time colleague Khondaker Mushtaque Ahmed.

He said Mushtaque had assumed power through the killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib on August 15, 1975 and forced many old colleagues to join his cabinet at gunpoint. But as the four leaders refused to join the cabinet, they were sent to the central jail one week later.

"Even then Mushtaque did not feel safe. So, he killed them (the four leaders) in jail by sending a killer group."

The President said: "This cruel and barbaric incident is rare in world history and will

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Bill passed to raise Tk 200 cr in taxes

A bill seeking to mobilise Tk 200 crore by levying surcharge for funding post-flood rehabilitation works was passed by Parliament last night as the opposition staged a walkout in protest, reports UNB.

Finance Minister SAMS Kibria piloted the Post-flood Rehabilitation (Internal Resource Mobilisation) Bill 1998 to ratify the extra-budgetary fiscal measure.

As many as 21 opposition members took part in discussion on the Bill, protesting the imposition of fresh taxes on the people beyond the budget.

The members of BNP and Jatiya Party who joined the debate and moved amendments to the Bill are: Moshir Rahman, Shamsul Islam Pramanik, Shahidul Islam, Abul Kalam Azad Siddique, Goutam Chakraborty, Major (Retd) Akhtaruzzaman, Prof Shaiful Islam, Rustam Ali, Farazi, Shah, Mohammad, Abul Hossain, ANM Ehsanul Huq Milon, Adv. Khairul Ealam, Rafiqul Islam Bakul, Golam Quader, Abu Yusuf Mohammad Khalilur

Rahman, Dr Moyeen Khan, Al-hal Mohammad Ali, Abdul Mannan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Ukil Abdus Sattar, Shamsuzzaman Dudu and MK Anwar.

Defending the Bill, Kibria said the new taxes amounting to Tk 200 crore are for 'symbolic participation' of the people in the flood-rehabilitation programme, alongside external aid which he said is the taxpayers money of donor countries.

"This amount will not bring about any big change, but it has a wide significance in that the donors would be convinced that the people here are also ready to face this terrible flood, besides enhancing the country's image abroad," he told the House.

The Finance Minister said the additional tax would not affect commonman — peasants and workers — since the surcharges were being levied on e-mail, fax phones and savings.

He said BNP stood to the Bill possibly because it affected the interests of the rich.

The governments' economic pointsman admitted that the

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'Razia was raped, then murdered'

By Staff Correspondent

Post-mortem report has revealed that Razia Begum, a maid, was killed after being raped, a press release of Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) said yesterday.

Forensic department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital carried out the post-mortem twice which confirmed that she was raped before being murdered.

Razia, 13, reportedly fell unconscious while working at a flat of a staff nurse in the cantonment area and died at the Combined Military Hospital Thursday.

The forensic department confirmed in the first report that she was raped and then killed but Cantonment police, before getting the first report, ordered for the second one, ASK said.

Police also refused to take an unnatural death (UD) case, it added.

Father of the victim came in DMCH morgue Sunday and saw his daughter's body. He said he would be back some time to take away the body. But he did not, ASK claimed.

Time wasted in the name of saving time

By Staff Correspondent

In the name of saving time, there was a time consuming debate over a call attention notice in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

Already accepted by the Speaker, the notice produced a half-hour debate whether it should be read out or not as it was "too long".

It all began when Prime Minister's Parliamentary Affairs Adviser Suranjit Sengupta told the Chair that a member should not be allowed to read out a 138-line notice. "Besides, the subject of the notice is neither important nor urgent."

"You may ask the member not read out the notice, and give a ruling that the notice is deemed to have been read out," Sengupta advised the Chair.

It was a notice from BNP MP Major (ret'd) Akhtaruzzaman, dealing with corruption, inefficiency and abuse of power and so on by police. Asked by the Chair, he was already on his feet to read out the notice.

Attributing the low-level of professional efficiency of police mainly to the politically motivated use of the force by the governments, Akhtaruzzaman suggested a set of remedies.

However, Sengupta's statement generated a substantive amount of heat among the BNP members. A number of them stood up demanding floor to protest the prime ministerial adviser's observation.

The floor went to M K Anwar. "The MP concerned submitted the notice as per rules much earlier, while you have already included it in the order of the day presumably after necessary scrutiny. But how come, the Treasury Bench member is now objecting to the opposition MP's right to read out the notice in the House?"

Quoting the JS Rules of Procedure, Anwar asserted that it mentions nothing about the length or size of a notice.

The rule says: "Any member

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Gunfight: Student killed, 50 hurt in Kishoreganj

KISHOREGANJ, Nov 16: A fierce gunfight between two rival groups at Neyamatpur Bazar in Karimganj thana today left a student dead and at least 50 people injured, reports UNB.

The dead was identified as Khokon Miah, 20, a student of Gathata College in Katiadi thana.

Police said the gunbattle between the supporters of one Kabiruddin and UP chairman Helaluddin took place at about 11 am over the possession of Neyamatpur Bazar bus terminal.

During the four-hour gunfight, the groups traded at least 10 rounds of shot. Fifteen shops were also ransacked.

Of the injured, Tipu Sultan, 22, Ashik Kabir Sayem, 18, Rusel, 25, Raju, 20 and Nayan, 16, were admitted to Kishoreganj Sadar Hospital while Siraj, 50, to Karimganj thana health centre.

Earlier on Saturday, the two groups clashed over the disbursement of agricultural loan in the area.

Rafiq refutes using police for political purpose

Home Minister Major (Rtd) Rafiqul Islam yesterday refuted in parliament an allegation by a BNP lawmaker, saying the police is not used for political ends, reports UNB.

Responding to a call attention notice of Major (Rtd) Akhtaruzzaman (BNP-Kishoreganj), he said the situation has improved much than the past as "we don't use police for political purpose".

The Home Minister, however, assured that a high-powered committee will be set up to review the government's and Akhtaruzzaman's suggestions in preparing a plan to solve the problems of police.

In his notice, Akhtaruzzaman placed an 18-point proposal to recast the situation with more financial benefits and training, and make it accountable and free from political influence.

PCJSS to launch movement from December 2

BANDARBAN, Nov 16: Formerly insurgent PCJSS is going to launch an open political movement after 26 years, demanding 'proper' implementation of the December 1997 CHT peace agreement, hill sources said, reports APB.

The Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) is likely to announce its agitation programmes on December 2, the day it initiated the historic peace agreement with the government exactly one year back.

PCJSS chief Jyotindra Bodhipriya Larma alias Shantu Larma will announce the programmes from a public meeting scheduled to be held at Sadar in Rangamati on that day.

The tribal organisation had begun open politics after laying down of weapons by Shantibahini cadres following the signing of the peace agreement.

The PCJSS was formed by Shantu Larma's elder brother Manobendra Narayan Larma in 1972 with the objective of establishing the rights of the Jummo population.

One shot dead at Chittagong

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, Nov 16: Unidentified assailants gunned down a youth at Chandanpura here this evening, police said.

Mad Masud, 20, was shot at 6 pm by the assailants when he was standing on a road, police said.

Masud was rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries, police added.

Some top officials promoted, transferred

By Special Correspondent
A number of changes have been made in the administration with promotion and transfer of some high officials, the government announced yesterday.

Mohammad Sohul Hossain, Joint-secretary (JS) of the law, justice and parliamentary affairs ministry has been promoted and made additional secretary in the ministry. He is a member of the BCS (judicial) cadre.

Mizanur Rahman, has been appointed JS in the power, energy and mineral resources ministry. Abdul Kayyum Thakur, JS, planning division has been transferred to education ministry as JS. Syed Abdul Munim has been appointed JS, planning division.

Mohammad Abdul Huq-2, JS, agriculture ministry has been transferred to shipping ministry as JS. Director of government employees welfare directorate, Mohammad Bazlur

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