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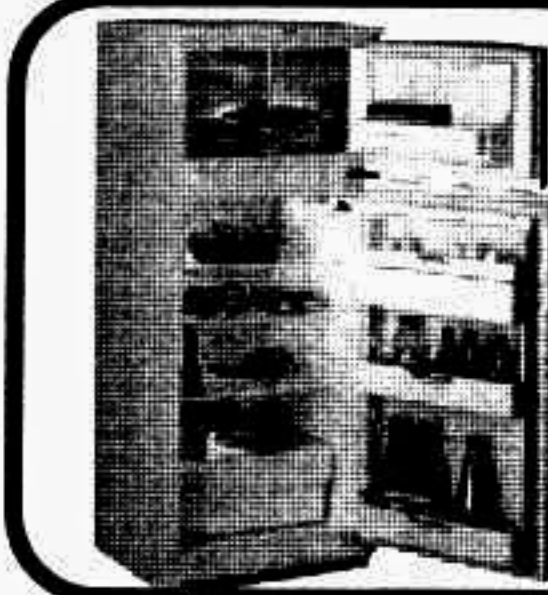
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Visiting EU team says

Tremendous scope for development in CHT

KHAGRACHHARI, Feb 8: A high-level delegation of the European countries gave a positive indication of providing assistance for overall development of the hill districts, reports UNB.

Exchanging views with local journalists after visiting the district today, the delegation members said the prime task is to develop the socio-economic status, establish small industries and family-income enhancement projects in the region.

LDF threatens to boycott municipal polls

By Staff Correspondent

Leaders of Left Democratic Front (LDF) yesterday threatened that the alliance would be compelled to boycott the ensuing municipal elections if a congenial atmosphere was not created, says a press release.

Urging the government and the Election Commission to take effective measures for creating a healthy environment for holding a fruitful election, LDF leaders also expressed concern over the volatile political situation, the release said.

The leaders met the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Mohammad Abu Henia at his office yesterday.

Led by its coordinator AFM Mahbubul Haque, the LDF team met the CEC at the latter's invitation.

The leaders said that the municipal election was "uncertain due to the prevailing situation in the country."

The delegation is visiting Rangamati and Khagrachhari districts to assess the latest situation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts following the peace accord signed in December, 1997.

Led by German Ambassador in Dhaka Uwe Schramm, the delegation comprises British High Commissioner David C Walker, French Ambassador Renee Veyret, Dutch Ambassador Dick CB Heize, Swedish Ambassador Anders Johnson, Charge d'Affaires of Denmark Finn Thilsted, Political Attache at the Italian Embassy Rosana Masare and E Volker of the EC delegation in Dhaka.

Additional Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong Sharif Taveb Rahman was with the delegation.

The European delegation talked with Khagrachhari Hill District Council Chairman Jatindra Lal Tripura and government officials at the local circuit house.

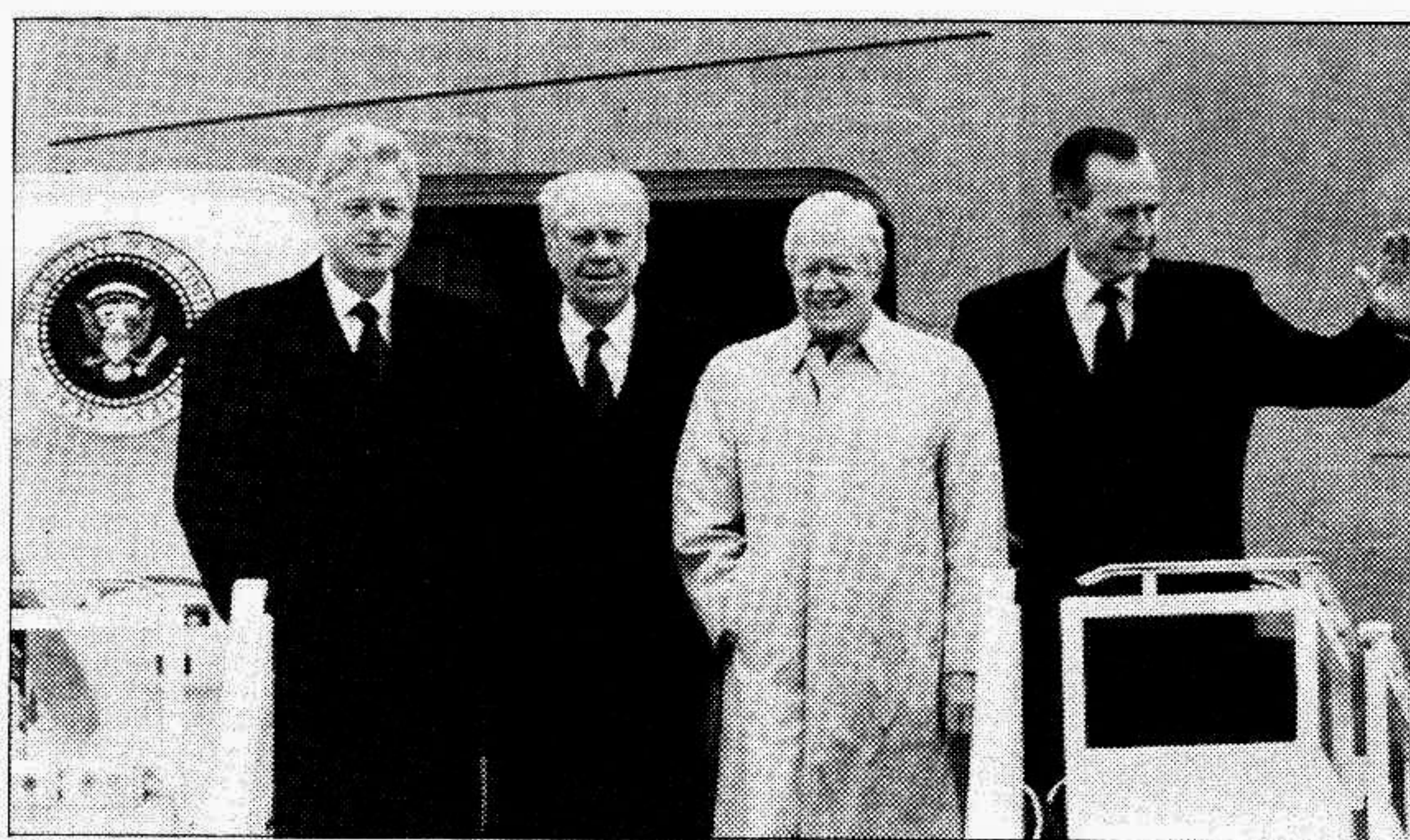
Later, they met with Rupanayan Dewan, a top leader of the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity.

The delegation also held talks with President of Juman Refugees Welfare Association Upendra Lal Chakma at Dighinala after visiting the villages where the repatriated refugees were rehabilitated.

The delegation said they were identifying and evaluating the areas of the districts which need to be developed.

They said a tremendous scope for development has been created in the hill districts following the CHT accord.

Replying to a query, the delegation members expressed their satisfaction seeing the normalcy returned to the hill districts.



US President Bill Clinton (L) and three of his predecessors, Gerald Ford (2nd L), Jimmy Carter (2nd R) and George Bush (R) arrive in Amman yesterday to attend the state funeral of King Hussein. — AFP photo

King Hussein

From page 1

Hussein's favourite white stallion, riderless and with black boots facing backwards in the stirrups, followed the coffin.

In keeping with Muslim tradition, Hussein's American-born widow Queen Noor and other women were absent from the service.

Proclaimed king at the age of 16 in 1952, Hussein led Jordan through decades of war, upheaval and shifting alliances and to a landmark peace treaty with neighbouring Israel in 1994.

Few of his 4.6 million people, citizens of a strategic desert kingdom knit together under Hussein's rule, had known any other leader.

Tens of thousands of Jordanians, many of them weeping and wailing, lined the route of the funeral cortege that bore Hussein's coffin across Amman from the Bab Al-Salaam (door of peace) Palace to Raghadan.

Some fainted, others slapped their faces in grief and scores surged through police lines to throw themselves at the coffin.

"The dearest person to us has died. No, he is not dead. He can't be dead. I worship King Hussein," said Asma Mohammad, clad entirely in black, she had travelled from north of Amman for a last, fleeting glimpse of her monarch.

The world, too, was coming to terms with a loss of a man

central to the US led effort to end the Arab-Israeli conflict.

"You can't replace him but you can build on the foundation he laid," British Prime Minister Tony Blair told Reuters. "One of the legacies of King Hussein is to leave for Jordan and for his successor that sense of goodwill."

Clinton called King Hussein, his closest Middle East ally, a partner and friend. "When peace finally comes to the Middle East, his name will be inscribed upon it," Clinton said in a statement before leaving Washington on Sunday.

Abdullah, a Major-General with strong backing by an army still key to Jordan's stability, was named heir in place of his long-serving uncle Hassan two weeks ago and is the first of a new generation of leaders in a region of ageing rulers.

Unsettled politically, he inherits a kingdom sandwiched strategically between Israel and Iraq, a troubled economy and an undercurrent of dissent over peace with Israel among his subjects, many of whom are Palestinians.

Pledges of economic aid and of support for the new monarch, who has vowed to follow Hussein's path of peace, have accompanied the eulogies for his late father.

Syria's president Assad, who had refused to see Hussein in recent years, embraced Abdullah and kissed him on both cheeks following King Hussein's burial.



The national flag flying at half-mast atop a government office in the city as a mark of respect to King Hussein of Jordan. — Star photo

Khaleda

From page 1

The meeting also had empowered the party chief to play the trump card — submit the resignations to the speaker — as and when she would find it propitious.

Begum Zia said the opposition has no scope to speak in Parliament against the "misrule" of the government and to depict the true picture of the country.

"We have to rethink how long such a situation in Parliament will continue," said the Leader of the Opposition, who is now leading a resistance movement against the upcoming municipal elections.

Begum Zia told the meeting that BNP had taken to the streets in the wake of "grim situation when the country's independence is under threat and people's fundamental rights are insecure."

About the boycott of municipal polls, the former Prime Minister said Abu Henia was nominated as a consensus candidate for the part of Chief Election Commissioner by all parties to discharge his duties, maintaining the sanctity of the post of oath.

"But the CEC has failed to uphold the dignity of the post either for his inefficiency or serving the purpose of the ruling Awami League, she said.

Begum Zia said all the opposition parties had lost their confidence in the CEC for his "partisan role."

She asked the CEC to immediately resign for the sake of democracy. "Your resignation would head off all from the path of confrontation the country is moving towards."

Strike protesting price hike shuts Calcutta

CALCUTTA, Feb 8: Normally bustling Calcutta was closed today by a general strike over commodity prices called by powerful leftist unions, reports AP.

Flights in and out of Calcutta's international airport were closed by the strike, which also affected other parts of West Bengal state. With commuter trains and buses also affected, few businesses and schools could operate because workers, teachers and students were stuck at home.

School children took advantage of the 24-hour strike to play cricket in the streets and in local parks, celebrating a victory by India's national cricket team over arch-rival Pakistan the day before.

The police ministry said no violence was reported during the strike, and added that work was uninterrupted in the tea-growing areas in the state's north.

Calcutta is India's second largest city and a center for tea and other industries.

Unions allied with Communist Party that governs West Bengal and with Congress party called the strike to protest price increases ordered by the federal

Babul murder

From page 1

man Manju's name has been dropped from the chargesheet though some of the arrested accused in the case in their confessional statements alleged involvement of Manju in the killing.

The petitioner prayed for inclusion of Manju's name in the chargesheet and sought further investigation in this regard.

Metropolitan Magistrate Shamsur Rahman heard the petition and fixed hearing of the petition today.

Enact law to ban hartal

From page 1

their 'confrontational attitudes' leading to hartals that mainly 'affect businesses.'

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBBCCI) summoned the meeting, attended by leading chamber and association leaders and representatives from some district chambers. FBBCCI president Abdul Awal Minto chaired the meeting.

Former MCCCI president Laila Rahman Kabir, who attended meeting, told the news agency over telephone that the 'business community agreed across the board to go for a visible action' to keep their business unhindered and uninterrupted.

The action programme is likely to be announced before the opposition's possible series of hartals later this month, she said.

Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI) president Sharif M Almaz Hossain told UNB after the meeting that they had a detailed discussion over the economy and trade, and talked about ways on how to stand against the hartals. "FBBCCI president has been given full authority to finalise our action

programme," he said.

Either thrash out political disputes through dialogue or compensate for the business losses" was the common sentiment of the meeting towards the ruling and opposition political parties.

It felt that the disputes over municipal elections could be settled through negotiations with the opposition parties. "There is a lack of effective initiative from the government to end it," the business leaders said.

They also blamed opposition for their 'tit-for-tat' attitude for 'enforcing total shutdown even in cities where there is no municipality.'

"If they (opposition) want to press for resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner, then why don't they gherao the Election Commission for one month or more? Why do they call countrywide hartals?" one business leader was quoted as saying.

Many business leaders also spoke against the two-day weekend and urged making it one day. In this month that has 28 days, they will have only 14 workdays, excluding hartals and weekends. Besides, four Sundays will be excluded as these are international holi-

days. All trade leaders unanimously felt that their existence — the community as a whole — was at stake.

"It's not the question of politics. It endangers our very survival," one top business leader told UNB after the parleys.

It's not the service holders, but only the businesspeople who suffer from hartal, they observed.

The anti-hartal business conference also agreed that neither the government nor the opposition has the right to vitiate the environment for trade and investment.

Businesses also suffered huge loss during frequent hartals when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was in the opposition. "Now she is in power, but we did not get any compensation for the loss that put many of us in defaulters' list," many trade leaders said in the meet.

"The same thing is happening today. Today's major opposition, which was in power then, is going with 'tit-for-tat' policy," one chamber leader said.

"How much more cost they (opposition) do want the country to pay for their political confrontations?" the leaders asked.

Acquittal looks certain as Clinton's trial nears end

WASHINGTON, Feb 8: A year after the scandal broke and a month after the trial began, the Senate is ready to hear House prosecutors make their final arguments that President Bill Clinton committed perjury and obstruction of justice and should be removed from office, reports AP.

The impeachment drama is likely to be over by week's end. White House lawyers also planned to wrap up their case today by reiterating that while Clinton misled the nation in denying his affair with Monica Lewinsky, he committed no crime warranting expulsion.

With 67 votes, a two-thirds majority of senators, needed for conviction, it was a foregone conclusion the president's side would prevail.

One of the few elements of suspense left was whether those supporting conviction would even reach the symbolic level of a simple majority.

Democrats interview on the Sunday talk shows predicted that both counts would fail to win a majority. Republicans said the perjury charge might fall short but that a majority would vote to convict on the obstruction charge.

After a day of final arguments today the 100 senators

move into deliberations, probably behind closed doors, with the vote on the two articles expected Thursday or Friday.

Even with acquittal on both charges, the Senate would still be left with the question of whether to censure Clinton for his affair with the former White House intern and his attempts to conceal it.

Clinton was in Jordan to attend the funeral of King Hussein, as were two senators who will sit in judgment of him, Ted Stevens, an Alaska Republican, and Patrick Leahy, a Vermont Democrat. The lawmakers will not miss any votes Monday and Senate leaders decided to go ahead with the trial as scheduled.

The House trial managers and White House attorneys each had three hours to present their cases. Much was expected to be a repeat of Saturday's session, when the two sides backed up their arguments by playing videotaped testimony from Lewinsky. Clinton confidant Vernon Jordan and White House aide Sidney Blumenthal.

Rep. Bill McCollum of Florida, one of the 13 House trial managers, or prosecutors, said on CNN's "Late Edition" that the thrust of his argument would be that "this president should be removed from office

because we've proven perjury and obstruction of justice, that he did engage in all of this in order to defeat the claims of Paula Jones in her civil suit charging Clinton with sexual harassment."

But the House managers were all but acknowledging defeat.

"I think the legacy of this trial was the fact that the Democrats took the hard line of ignoring the criminal activity of one of their own rather than viewing the evidence objectively," another prosecutor, Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin, said on "Fox News Sunday."

One conservative Republican senator, Richard Shelby of Alabama, said on ABC's "This Week" that he had concerns that both ways against Clinton were "porous in nature," and guessed that 10 to 15 of the 55 Republican senators might vote to acquit on the perjury charge.

All 45 Democrats could vote to acquit on both counts. Possibly the only two doubts are Sen. Russ Feingold of Wisconsin, the only Democrat to vote against an earlier Democratic motion to dismiss the charges, and Sen. Robert Byrd of West Virginia, a staunch defender of the Constitution and Senate traditions.

3 gunned down in Pak Punjab

MULTAN, Feb 8: Unidentified gunmen shot dead three activists of the Shia Muslim sect today in Pakistan's central province of Punjab, police said, reports Reuters.

They said the bullet-riddled bodies of the three men were found at Jahanian, some 35 km east of Multan city in southern Punjab, hours after they had left Multan in a car for the provincial capital Lahore in the northeast.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack.

48-hr hartal

From page 1

be dire," he said.

The government leader claimed that the government had made the shutdown inevitable by ignoring the opposition demands. He also blamed the government for "preparing to use the branded criminals against the pro-hartal activists on the streets and putting undue pressure on the business community to speak against the opposition programme". Bhuiyan termed the government plans as the last resort to cling to power.

He called upon the people to observe the two-day hartal "braving all repression and provocation from the government".

CEC: Dialogue

From page 1

after a High Court order asking to hold the elections by March 19 this year.

The High Court issued the order following a writ petition filed by a municipality chairman, while the ministries of law and local government were the respondents. The respondents pleaded for a date for the elections, pending certain legal contentions. The court, after hearing both the parties, gave the order for holding the elections by March 19.

If shifting the polls is a solution to the present crisis, the government is free to seek a further extension in the relevant court," the CEC said. The EC has no legal power to do that."

Giving another option, Abu Henia said the parliament is also free to enact a law in this regard "but it would be a complicated one".

Replying to a question, he said if the government could secure a court order extending the deadline for holding elections, the scope for accommodating new candidates, understanding from the opposition parties, would be created. "May be some supplementary legal measures would be required."

If the contending political camps eventually fail to reach an understanding on the issue, the EC would go ahead with the already announced election schedule. "We have been left with no legal option, but to go ahead. But we would not hesitate to exercise our legal authority to cancel even the entire elections, if the polls is not fair."

When his attention was drawn to the opposition demand for his resignation, Abu Henia reiterated his position saying: "The opposition has not been able to substantiate the allegation. I shall not yield to an irrational demand."

Asked what would the Election Commission do if the law and order further deteriorated as the opposition parties were determined to frustrate the polls, Henia said, "Basically it is the responsibility of the government to deal with law and order. I am, however, going to have a discussion with the top officials of various law enforcing agencies on February 11."

Replying to another query, the CEC said that he had informal contacts with some BNP leaders. He, however, declined to elaborate the issue.

AL mass contact

From page 1

Group 3: Abdul Mannan, A Momin, Shamsur Rahman Khan, Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Matiar Rahman Talukder, Dr Amanullah, Fazlur Rahman Khan, Ahmed Hossain and Shafi Ahmed have been asked to visit Sherpur, Jamalpur, Mymensingh, Netrokona, Kishoreganj and Tangail.

Group 4: Kamruzzaman, M Yunus Ali, Mirza Sultan Raza, Rashed Mosharraf, Mainuddin Hasan, Chowdhury and Mahbubul Haq Shakil will visit Narail, Kushtia, Chuadanga and Meherpur.

Group 5: Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Mukul Bose, Imam Uddin, Sheikh Fazlul Karim, Nurul Majid Humayun, Bahalul Majnun Churnu, Shaniar Rumi and AFM Bahauddin Nasim will visit Rajbari, Faridpur, Madaripur and Gopalganj.

Group 6: Amir Hossain Amu, Shudangshu Shekhar Halder, Abul Hasnat Abdullah, KM Jahangir, Jahangir Kabir Nanak and Shahe Alam have been asked to conduct mass contact in Bhola, Pirojpur, Patuakhali, Barguna, Barisal and Jhalakathi.

Group 7: Abdur Razzak, Abdur Rahim, Ashkur Rahman, Siddiq Hossain, Kamruzzaman Ansari and Enamul Haq Shamim will visit Rangpur, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat and Gaibandha.

Group 8: Tofail Ahmed, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Munnujan Sufian, SM Kamal Hossain and Abdul Majid will visit Khulna (district), Satkhira, Bagerhat, Jessore and Magura.

Group 9: Dr Mohammad Selim, Abu Sayeed, Fulu Sarker, Manjurul Haq Lavlu and Ishaq Ali Khan Panna will carry out mass contact in Sirajganj, Pabna and Natore.

Group 10: Abdul Jalil, Abdul Mannan, Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Habibur Rahman Khan and Abu Syed Al Mahmud Swa-

pan will visit Chapainawabganj, Naogaon, Joypurhat and Bogra.

Group 11: Mofazzar Hossain Paltu, Obaidul Qader, ABM Taleb Ali, Fazlul Haq, Monayer Sarker, Jahangir Sattar Tinku and BM Mojamal have been asked to visit Noakhali, Laxmipur and Feni.

Group 12: Mohammad Nasim, Abdul Kader Siddiqui, Akhtaruzzaman, Iqbalur Rahim and Mosharraf Hossain will visit Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur and Nilphamari.

Group 13: Matia Chowdhury, Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury, MA Mannan, Engineer Mosharraf Hossain, AZM Nasruddin and Nurul Amin Ruhul will visit Chittagong (south), Chittagong (north), Comilla, Brahmanbaria and Chandpur.

Benazir denied permission to attend funeral

ISLAMABAD, Feb 8: Former prime minister Benazir Bhutto says she was denied permission to leave Pakistan to attend today's funeral of Jordan's King Hussein, reports AP.

"She made an effort to attend his funeral and waited for permission from the government until the last minute, but the government did not give her permission to leave the country," said her party spokesman Farhatullah Babar.

"Ms. Bhutto had close relations with King Hussein and has been deeply moved by his death," he said.

Benazir's name is on Pakistan's exit control list, a long list of people whom the government says cannot leave the country without permission.

Her name is on the list because of several corruption cases against her.

Misuse of funds

From page 1

The highest amount of money was spent for salaries and other benefits of employees. The amount was Tk 6,276,190 against Tk 4,781,715 in the previous year. Expenditure for seminars and conference rose to Tk 661,296.

The report also revealed that ICMAB authorities spent Tk 2,667,077 as general and administration expenses.

According to the report, the loss on disposal of obsolete inventories was Tk 762,852 against no expense in the earlier session.

The authorities spent a total of Tk 4,007,990 as 'over expenditure' against an income of Tk 12,466,959 during the period under review.

The report also revealed that the authorities increased the admission fees by about Tk 2,000 in the last 14 years.

It is also learnt that a student of ICMAB pays more charges in almost every section than a student of the Institute of Cost Accounts of Bangladesh (ICAB).

A student of ICMAB pays Tk 6,300 for admission while a student of ICAB pays Tk 1,765 only for the same. As regards examination fees, an ICMAB student pays Tk 2,460 for 12 subjects while a student of ICAB Tk 300 for six subjects.

Moreover, a student of ICAB does not pay for library and identity card. But a student of ICMAB pays Tk 50 and Tk 40 respectively for those. There is no annual charge at ICAB for students but it is Tk 220 at ICMAB.

The ICMAB, an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Commerce, has been meeting the demand for cost and management accounts by providing professional education.

The students of ICMAB have been agitating since December 20 last against the authorities' decision to raise various charges at the institute. They took to the streets on December 31 as the authorities closed the institute sine die.

The students under the banner of Andolan Bastabayan Parishad (ABP) submitted a memorandum to commerce and industries minister Tofail Ahmed for taking initiative to resolve the crisis.

They accused the authorities of closing the institute despite an agreement with them. The National Council accepted the 20-point demand on December 30.

When contacted, a council member told The Daily Star that the present crisis resulted from the one-sided decision of the council.

"The NC takes decisions whatever they like and never pay heed to the demands of the students," he said seeking anonymity.

The NC held a meeting on January 7 but failed to take any decision to reopen the institute or resolve the ongoing crisis.

Members of the council Abdul Mannan, Chowdhury Hafizur Rahman, Prof Anisur Rahman and Satipati Moltri boycotted the meeting due to their disagreement with other members.

On Thursday, the ABP activists locked the institute as their demands were not met. Earlier, they had given an ultimatum to the institute authorities to accept their demands by that day.

Meanwhile, the ICMAB authorities are now trying to influence the agitating students for a fruitful solution to the crisis.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

Published by the Editor from City Publishing House Ltd., 90 Kakrail, Dhaka-1000 on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd., 52 Motijheel C.A., Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: No. 11, Road No. 3, Dhanamandir R/A, Dhaka-1205. PABX: 866772-4, Commercial: 866771, Fax No: 88-02-863035, GPO Box No: 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA. Internet edition address: http://www.dailystarnews.com and Email address: dstar@bangla.net