



Communications Minister Anwar Hossain offering *munaajat* after unveiling the plaque of the rehabilitated Dhaka-Aricha highway at Savar yesterday. —PID photo

Govt to provide 400 computers to schools

By DU Correspondent

The government will provide 400 computer to the secondary schools at thana-level across the country to promote computer literacy. Minister for Science and Technology Nooruddin Khan said yesterday.

Speaking at a seminar as chief guest, he said the government has already made agreements with six countries on computer technology.

The seminar on 'Computer Education and Employment Opportunity' was held at the seminar room of Chemistry Department of the Dhaka University.

The minister urged the private organisations to work along side government to eradicate computer illiteracy.

Dr Md Alamgir Hossain, chairman of the DU Computer Science Department, presented the key-note paper.

Addressing the seminar, DU VC A K Azad Chowdhury announced that all the departments and residential halls of the university will be provided with computer facilities soon.

Speakers at the seminar also emphasised on the importance of computer education in all the educational institutions and especially in the universities to produce a good number of programmer each year for the software development industry.

The seminar was organised by the Dhaka University Students' Computer Association.

JS adopts obituary references

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday adopted two obituary references condoling the death of Ahmed Ali, a BNP MP, and King Hussein of Jordan.

Moved by Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury, the resolutions were passed by the House unanimously.

Earlier, Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad conducted a *munaajat* in parliament, seeking divine blessings for salvation of the departed souls. The Chair allowed five MPs including Leader of the House and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to discuss briefly on the life and work of late Ahmed Ali.

Ahmed Ali, a BNP legislator from Meherpur-1 constituency of the Jatiya Sangsad, died on February 13 in Dhaka at the age of 65. And King Hussein of Jordan died on February 7 in Amman at the age of 63.

As a mark of respect to the departing souls, the session was adjourned yesterday, keeping other businesses of the day pending.

Paying tribute to the memory of late MP, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said Ahmed Ali was a patriot, freedom fighter and language movement veteran. At his death, the nation has suffered an irreparable loss, she added.

The Prime Minister recalled with deep gratitude the simple life style of late Ali and his contribution to the parliamentary democracy.

Deputy Leader of the House Zillur Rahman, Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury, BNP lawmaker Shamsuzzaman Dudu and Jatiya Party legislator Advocate Fazle Rabbi also spoke on the life and works of Ahmed Ali.

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Iran denies Pak reports on Laden

TEHRAN, Feb 14: Tehran categorically denied today Pakistani reports that Washington's public enemy number one, Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden, was headed for Iran, reports AFP.

Claims by a Pakistani intelligence officer that Bin Laden had been seen on the Iranian border after his reported disappearance from his Afghan hideout were "irresponsible" and "regrettable," a Foreign Ministry spokesman said.

The reports were aimed at "confusing public opinion," the spokesman told the official news agency IRNA.

The Taliban militia, which controls 80 per cent of Afghanistan, announced today that Bin Laden had disappeared and might have left Afghanistan.

Its claim was greeted with caution by Britain and the United States, who hold Bin Laden responsible for a series of attacks against western targets.

Bin Laden was believed to have been living in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar, the Taliban's de facto base, since the United States last year launched missile strikes against his camps in Afghanistan.

His continued residence has raised fears of new US military action and hindered the Taliban's efforts to be recognised as the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan.

Analysts said the Taliban may have moved to isolate Bin Laden to win international favour.

They want to hold one-party polls, says Ershad

SYLHET, Feb 14: Jatiya Party chairman H M Ershad today warned of serious consequences if government goes for 'one-party' municipal polls, reports UNB.

"We, all the opposition parties, will launch a united one-point out-government movement," he said while addressing a public meeting at Kanaighat Bazar ground here.

Ershad said this government would only accentuate problems if it remains in power.

"We raised the four-point demand only to create a congenial environment for the elections but the government neglected our demands. They want to hold a one-party election," he said.

The former president said they did not want politics of hatred but "Awami League forced 265 days of hartal during my regime."

He said Jatiya Party urged the government to pass a law against hartal when Awami League announced that it would not call any more hartal. "But they don't believe in what they say. They kept mum when we said we would support the government in passing the law."

He said the people of the country want to see AL removed from power. "So, not in party interest, it is in the interest of the people that we are compelled to call for hartal," he said.

Presided over JP leader Abdul Mukit Khan MP, the meeting was addressed, among others, by party presidium member Kazi Zafar Ahmed and Ismail Hossain Bengal, Nasiruddin Chowdhury and district JP president Advocate Giasuddin.

7 gunned down in India

PATNA, Feb 14: Seven persons were gunned down by extremists of an unidentified banned ultra-left outfit at Usribazar under Mehendia police station in Jehanabad district today, reports PTI.

Jehanabad district magistrate, Pratyay Antril PTI that the heavily armed extremists attacked the shop of one Nawalkishore Sharma and sprayed bullets at him.

Seven persons including Sharma standing in front and around the shop died on the spot after receiving bullets. The victims included four members of an upper caste community.

Police had launched massive manhunt to track down the killers.

Another Shi'ite Muslim gunned down in Punjab

MULTAN, Feb 14: As thousands of Shi'ite Muslims protested the recent killings of their brethren in eastern Punjab province, another Shi'ite Muslim was gunned down today, police said, reports AP.

Two gunmen on a motorcycle shot and killed Shahsawar Naikokar, 40, in Karampur neighbourhood of Vehari town, some 50-km from Multan in eastern Punjab province.

No one took responsibility for the attack, but police suspect it was religiously motivated and was carried out by militant Sunni Muslims.

Nearby in Kuramdad Qureshi, several thousand Shi'ite Muslims held a memorial to honor 17 of their brethren who were slain in January. They were killed by gunmen who shot them while they prayed in a mosque in Kuramdad Qureshi.

"We want the government to protect us," said Musawir Naqvi, a spokesman for the militant Shi'ite Muslim group, Tehrik-e-Jafria Pakistan. Naikokar also was a member of Tehrik-e-Jafria.

Extremists Sunni and Shi'ite Muslim groups regularly clash each other in the Punjab province, the home of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Scores of people have died in January. Most of the victims have been Shi'ite Muslims.

'Japan should have its own policy toward Baghdad' UN urged to halt US, British air strikes on Iraq

BAGHDAD, Feb 14: Iraq urged the United Nations today to halt US and British air strikes and said the UN panels set up to review links with Baghdad after a two-month hiatus were a waste of time, reports AFP.

The United Nations "must intervene immediately to call on parties involved to halt the aggression, in line with UN resolutions over respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity" of Iraq, said the ruling Baath Party.

Ath-Thawra, the party's newspaper, said the attacks in no-fly zones over southern and northern Iraq since December amounted to a "flagrant violation of the UN Charter, international law and Security Council resolutions."

"Nothing in the Security Council resolutions authorises the United States and Britain or any other country to impose these air exclusion zones," the newspaper insisted.

Ath-Thawra accused Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Turkey of playing "an active role in the aggression" by allowing US and British warplanes to use their bases and airspace.

The Arab League should also take action, it said.

Six civilians have been killed and several others wounded in a new escalation of air strikes since Thursday, following a week-long period of calm, according to Iraqi authorities.

On the diplomatic front, Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz said the three UN panels unveiled in New York on Friday were a "waste of time" and an obstacle to Baghdad's campaign to secure a lifting of sanctions.

"The work of these commissions does not concern us, Iraq is not a participant in this game," he said in an interview published today by the Emirati newspaper Al-Khaleej.

Aziz said the panels were set up to conceal divisions within the Security Council, between the United States and Britain which take a hard line and Russia and France which are more sympathetic toward Baghdad.

AP adds: Japan should develop its own foreign policy toward Iraq and stop its "blind alliance" with the United States, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz said in a television interview Sunday.

Aziz criticised Japan for supporting US and British missile attacks on Iraq which he called a "violation of interna-

tional law."

"This is another example of the blind alliance with the United States by the Japanese government," Aziz told Japan's Asahi TV via satellite from Baghdad.

He cautioned Japanese against forming opinions about Iraq through the US media.

"Why don't you come and see Iraq yourself?" he said.

Aziz accused the United States of trying to demonise Iraqi President Saddam Hussein because he is an "independent leader who won't say yes" to US demands.

Aziz repeated demands that economic sanctions against Iraq be dropped. He accused Washington of wanting to overthrow the government of Iraq and to install a leader who is more sympathetic to the United States.

Aziz reiterated that Iraq would not allow the return of a United Nations weapons inspection team, which he accused of serving as a front for the CIA and Mossad, the Israeli intelligence agency.

"We cannot accept a branch of the CIA and Mossad into Iraq under the umbrella of the United Nations," he said.



Death anniversary of Anwarul Islam Bobby today

Today is the fifth death anniversary of Anwarul Islam Bobby, Founder-Editor of The Daily Life of Chittagong, The Pulse, and The Morning Star, says a press release.

He died on this day in 1994 in Dubai on his way to London for treatment of leukemia.

Special arrangements have been made to feed the poor and the destitute.

All friends, relatives and admirers are requested to pray for his departed soul.

Menon demands free, fair poura polls

Workers' Party general secretary Rashed Khan Menon has demanded of the Election Commission to hold free and fair voting in the ensuing municipal polls, reports UNB.

"People will reject the poura (municipal) election in case of rigging or voterless polls because of the government's obstinacy," he said addressing a party rally at Paltan Maidan in the city yesterday.

Menon said his party is participating in the municipal election, but possibility of a peaceful voting seems limited due to the behaviour of the government.

The rally, organised by the city unit of Workers' Party, was also addressed by Nurul Hasan, Paresh Chandra Saha, Nasar Ahmed Alam and Akhtar Sobhan Masur and Kamrul Ahsan presided.

In a declaration at the rally, the Workers' Party raised a five-point demand and called upon all concerned to forge a left alternative by rejecting the rightist BNP and its allies.

Birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna



A five-day-long celebration of the 164th birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna begins at the Ramakrishna Mission in the city today, says a press release.

On the first day, the annual function of the Ramakrishna Mission School will be held. Swami Aksharananda will preside while Azad Rahman, Director General, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, will be present as Chief Guest.

On February 16, Prof Ranganath Sen will preside over a discussion on "Swami Vivekananda and the Dignity of Man". State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed will be present as Chief Guest. After the discussion, *baul* songs will be presented by eminent artist Kiran Chandra Roy.

Another discussion on "Sri Sarada Devi: Mother of all races" will be held the next day. At 7:30 pm, devotional songs will be presented by eminent TV and radio artists and a colourful children's programme will also be held.

Sri Ramakrishna's birthday falls on February 18. The day will be observed through special *puja*, *homa*, devotional songs, and recitation from the scriptures. At 5 pm, a discussion on "Sri Ramakrishna: Harmony in religious variety" will be held. A film on Sri Ramakrishna will be screened at 8 pm.

Prasad will be distributed at 12 noon on February 19. Musical programme will also be held in the evening.

2 killed in rice mill boiler burst in Sherpur

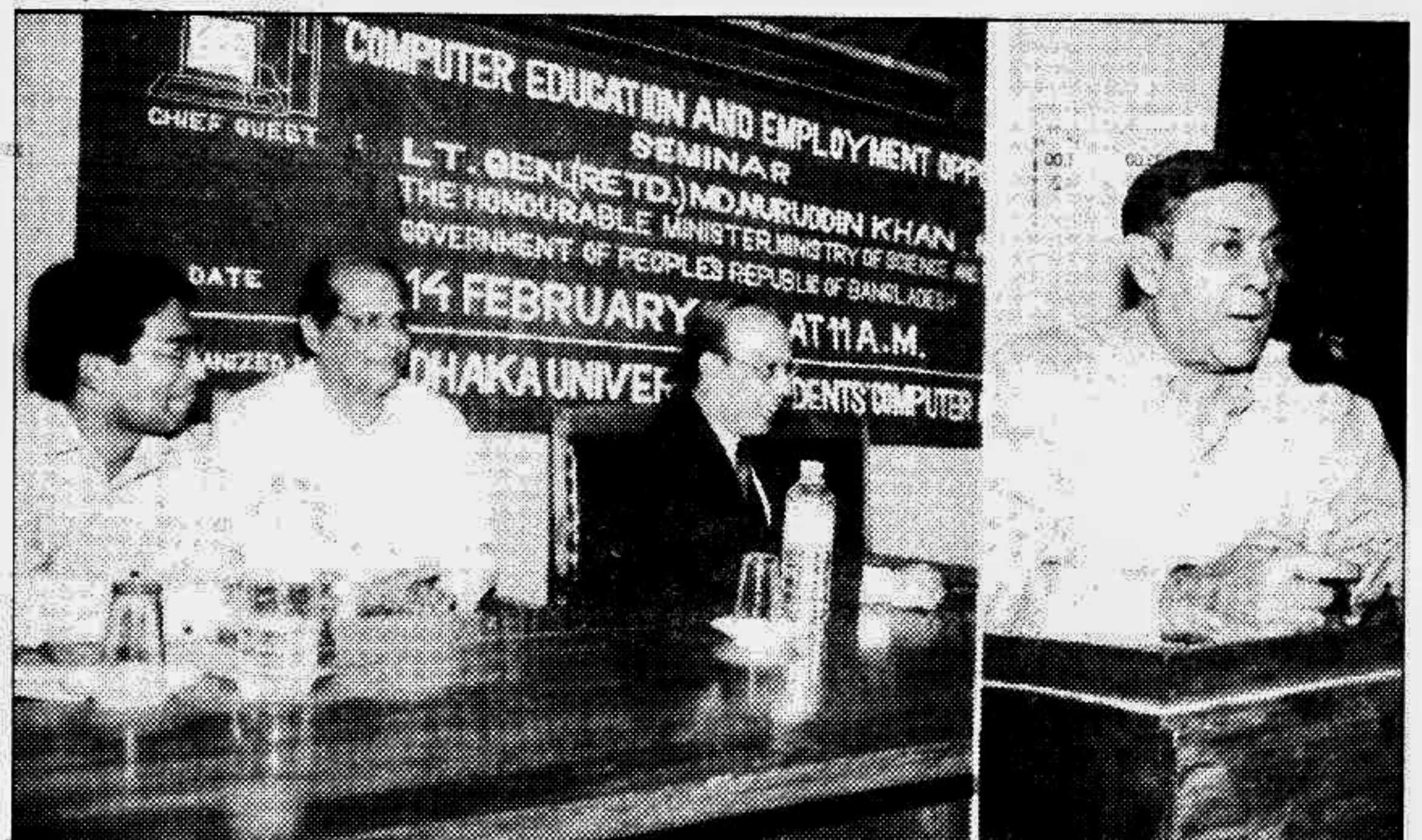
SHERPUR, Feb 14: Two people were killed in a rice mill boiler explosion in Nalibari thana this (Sunday) morning, reports APB.

Police and witnesses said Askar Ali, 35, a worker of Samrat Rice Mills at Nalibari Bazar, and Asfar Hossain, 32, a rice trader, were killed as the boiler of the mill exploded at about 7:30 am.

Asfar of village Chandgaon-Balishpur in the thana died on the spot while Ashkar of Chandgaon-Keotapara in the same thana succumbed to his injuries on way to hospital.

The bodies were sent to Sherpur Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy and a case was filed with Nalibari police.

Meanwhile, a housewife, Jaugunna, 25, of village Bhurunga-Porabari in Nalibari thana was killed in another rice mill accident on Saturday.



Minister for Science and Technology M Nooruddin Khan speaking at a seminar on 'Computer Education' at the Dhaka University yesterday. DU Vice-Chancellor Prof A K Azad Chowdhury was also present at the seminar.

Azam calls for forging unity to unseat govt

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Feb 14: Jamaat-e-Islam, Bangladesh chief Golam Azam called for forging unity to unseat the government as, what he said, independence, democracy and Islam were not safe under its rule.

Addressing a public meeting organised by Chittagong unit of the party at Lalidighi maidan today, Azam said, "We want to oust this government as it signed a treaty on Chittagong Hill Tracts in favour of India to jeopardise the independence of Bangladesh."

"This government has unleashed terrorism in the country instead of flourishing democracy," he added.

The Jamaat chief urged the people to boycott the ensuing municipality polls if the four-point demands were not fulfilled.

The meeting was held amid tight security with the deployment of a large number of police in an around the venue.

Tension was high in the port city following a threat from pro-Awami League Chhatra League supporters to foil the Jamaat meeting, police said, adding that tight security measures were taken all over the city to prevent any outbreak of violence and untoward incident.

Meanwhile, few minutes before the end of Golam Azam's speech at 5:20 pm, the panicked crowd suddenly started running from Lalidighi maidan when Chhatra League brought out a procession protesting the meeting at Kotwali crossing, witnesses said.

The processionists of BCL later went back to City College.

During the trouble at Lalidighi maidan, several hundreds of Jamaat activists with bamboo sticks in hands were seen urging the crowd not to move away and keep quiet, witnesses said.

Nobel laureate calls for referendum in East Timor

JAKARTA, Feb 14: Nobel Peace Prize winner Bishop Carlos Belo has accused rival factional leaders in East Timor of not representing the people's wishes and has called for an immediate referendum on the future of the former Portuguese territory, a newspaper reported Sunday, reports AP.

The report in The Jakarta Post quoted the Roman Catholic bishop as saying the views of East Timorese had been manipulated by various groups either for or against independence from Indonesia.

Belo said leaders, such as himself, jailed pro-independence rebel commander Alexandre Jose "Xanana" Gusmao and others, had made their views known to the Indonesian government, even though they do not represent the majority of East Timorese.

"Who says they represent the people?" East Timor's Roman Catholic bishop said. "The most relevant thing now is that all East Timorese speak up."

He complained of a gap between the territory's political elite and the vast majority of East Timorese, which invaded East Timor in 1975, has offered to grant independence to the half-island territory if its people reject an autonomy plan now being considered at UN-sponsored talks with Portugal.

Last week Indonesian President B J Habibie indicated that he favoured independence by as early as the start of next year.

Other Indonesian officials have said they want the East Timorese people to opt for an autonomous state within the Indonesian republic.

Indonesia has consistently rejected calls for a referendum saying that it would trigger deep

divisions within East Timorese society and could lead to civil war. But it has not said how the views of East Timor's people can be judged without a ballot.

There have already been some deadly clashes between rival armed groups.

Belo, who was the co-winner of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize, called on all factions to settle their differences peacefully.

He also suggested Habibie clarify his position or stage a vote.

"The president had better hold a referendum or make a clear presidential decree so that East Timorese also no longer need to have headache over the president's position," he said.

Belo said that personally he could accept Indonesia's autonomy offer ahead of a later referendum. However, he said he did not represent the people.

Predominately Muslim Indonesia declared overwhelmingly Roman Catholic East Timor its 27th province in 1976. The territory has been wracked by guerrilla warfare between rebel and Indonesian forces as well as human rights abuses ever since.

Until recently, Indonesia refused to consider granting independence to East Timor despite calls from many pro-independence activists.

However, its policy softened after former autocratic President Suharto, who ordered the invasion 24 years ago, quit power last May after riots and protests.

Habibie, a former protege of Suharto, has dismantled many features of his predecessor's rigid political legacy and has scheduled parliamentary elections for June 7.

Hindu radicals 'reconvert' Christian tribesmen

DINDORI, India, Feb 14: Hindu chants echoed in a rural expanse Sunday as right-wing radicals "reconverted" to their religion 150 Christian tribespeople — a handful among thousands of illiterate villagers they say have been forcibly proselytised by the church in India, reports AP.

Tribes people in their traditional dresses watched silently as Hindu priests in saffron invoked the gods under large colourful canvas tents in this central India village and welcomed back the new converts to the Hindu fold.

"The Vedas will triumph," thundered a prerecorded tape played on loudspeakers at the site, hailing the centuries-old Hindu scriptures on religion believed to have been written by ancient gurus.

Colourfully dressed men and

women stepped forward in groups of 15, squatting by the priests who exhorted them to be good Hindus and garlanded them with white holy threads as part of the conversion ceremony.

For Dilip Singh Judeo, a federal lawmaker and member of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata Party, it was a small victory in his years-old campaign against what his organisation believes is a campaign by Christian missionaries to convert thousands of tribespeople by force or allurements.

"There are enough Christians in the world, there is no need to convert Hindus to Christianity," said Judeo, who washed the feet of the tribespeople as Hindu gurus chanted Sanskrit mantras.



Nestle Bangladesh Ltd held a cooking demonstration of its products on The Daily Star office premises yesterday.