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37 Jamaat-Shibir men held at Moulvibazar, arms recovered

From Our Correspondent

MOULVIBAZAR, Mar 7: Police arrested 37 leaders and workers of Jamaat-e-Islami and its student organisation Islami Chhatra Shibir from Jamaat's district unit office here today and recovered huge arms and ammunition.

Of the arrested, four are the front ranking leaders of Jamaat district unit. They are Sirajul Islam Matlab, Ameer of district unit, Md Yunus, Principal of Kari Faruq KG School, Jasim Uddin Mamum and Hafiz Nazul Islam, both are the teachers of Kari Faruq KG School.

Acting on a tip off, police led by a Magistrate and additional SP raided the district unit office of Jamaat-e-Islami at Dewan Manzil in the town at noon and arrested the leaders and workers.

They also recovered huge arms and ammunition from the office.

The recovered arms and ammunition include 20 cock-tails, two LG, two pipeguns, 208 ram daos, one axe, 315 iron rods and 12 cartridges. Police also seized an unlicensed motorcycle from there.

Two separate cases have been lodged with Moulvibazar Sadar thana.

JP faction's council session April 23-24

The breakaway faction of Jatiya Party yesterday decided to hold a special council session of the party April 23-24, reports UNB.

This was announced at a meeting of the group at a city community centre, presided over by Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury.

Addressing the meeting, Communications Minister Anwar Hossain Manju said: "We want to stick to 'positive' politics of Jatiya Party for consolidating democracy and improving the socio-economic condition of the commonman."

"Our initiative is to ensure the voting right of people, resist politics of conspiracy and grabbing power through illegal means," he added. "Election should be the only means to change the government and to go to power."

Addressing the gathering Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury said, their aim was to build a well organised Jatiya Party. The party can't march forward at the free will of one person.

Reading out the declaration of the meeting, Sharfuddin Ahmed Jhantu MP, said Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, Anwar Hossain Manju and Tajul Islam were given the responsibility to call a special council session of the Jatiya Party on April 23-24.

Li Peng to visit Bangladesh Apr 14

Li Peng, chairman of the standing committee of People's Congress, China will visit Bangladesh next month, official sources said yesterday, reports BSS.

Li, who was the immediate past prime minister of China, currently holds second position in the hierarchy. He will be here on April 14 and be accompanied by ministers and senior officials.

Inside Today

Article

No Attempt Yet to Resolve Political Crisis

By Nurul Kabir
Page 4

Business

EC okays fish exports by 10 more exports

DSE, CSE price quotation
Pages 6, 7

Supplements

A two-page supplement on 'International Women's Day' on Pages 8&9 and one page supplement on 'Police Rally '99' on Page 10

Prayer Timings

March 8		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	5-35
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-35
Maghrib	6-10	6-13
Esha	7-25	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Bombs explode at Udichi function in Jessore

8 killed, over 100 injured

Star Report

Two powerful explosions at a cultural function of Udichi Shilpi Goshthi in the early hours of Sunday killed at least eight people and wounded more than 100 others, 29 of them critically, at an open air stage at Jessore Town Hall Maidan. None claimed responsibility for the explosions at an interval of five minutes, that tore through the dais at 1-10 am, killing two persons on the spot. Six others died in hospitals, our correspondents said.

Four of the dead were identified as Sandha Rani Ghose, Sheikh Nazmul Huda Tapan, Ram Krishna Roy and Shah Alam. They were artists of Udichi that organised the three-day celebrations on the occasion of its 31st founding anniversary and national conference. The three other dead have been identified as Babul Sudradhan, Elias, Noor Islam and Milan alias Minto.

The critically wounded were taken to Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH). From there six were flown to Dhaka by a helicopter. They are Ratan Biswas, 30, Monwar Alam, 32, Gokul Majhi, 28, Ali Ahmed, 20, Haran Chandra, 52 and Nahid, 22.

The others being treated at the KMCH include Sarin, 8, Ramjan Ali, 37, Monowar, 30 and Mohammad Ali, 23.

The explosions which police suspect were triggered by a timing device rocked the town, creating panic and leaving people wondering who had caused those.

Police arrested five suspects after the explosions. Army engineers and bomb experts have visited the area to search for clues regarding the explosives and devices used.

Some witnesses and police sources claimed that three hours before the incident, some muslimen kidnapped a young woman from the function after a quarrel with the organisers of the show.

They reportedly had the quarrel on payment of 'toll' to the youths. But Kotwali police were not available for comment.

Hasan Imam, who was re-elected President of Udichi, told newsmen that the attack was carried out in a planned manner, centring the conference of the organisation.

He along with others had earlier left Jessore for Dhaka after addressing the concluding session of the conference at about 10 pm.

Udichi Shilpi Goshthi was founded in 1968 as a cultural front of the Communist Party of Bangladesh. But the organi-

See Page 12 Col 7



Cultural activists bring out a protest procession, under the Udichi Kendriya Shangshad banner, demanding exemplary punishment for the killers of eight people at the 12th National Udichi festival in Jessore.

— Star photo

Hanif Mayor candidate again Identify those involved in bomb blasts: PM

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has announced that incumbent Mohammad Hanif is the Awami League candidate in the city corporation mayoral elections.

She expressed firm commitment to ensure that the upcoming local government polls are held in a free and fair manner.

The AL chief was speaking at a rally organised by her party in observance of the historic March 7 at Paltan Maidan in the city.

Against a backdrop of the combined opposition's much-propagated stand against the recently staged municipal polls, Hasina said, "They (the opposition) should be ashamed of their resist-polls call, which got no response from people. Even some BNP candidates have got elected in the pourashava (municipal) elections."

She urged her main rival

Khaleda Zia to express all grievances on the floor of the Jatiya Sangsad.

Hasina said that was informed about 10 bomb squads formed by BNP in Dhaka and urged Dhaka citizens to identify those involved in bomb explosions.

She mentioned the bomb explosions at Jessore in the early hours of Sunday but did not blame any one for the incident.

Contradicting the propaganda that her government would ban madrassah education in the country, the prime minister said, "I would like to reassure all that madrassah education will never be banned in this country." She provided figures that demonstrated an increasing trend in the budgetary allocation for the growth of madrassah education.

As she declared Hanif as her

See Page 12 Col 1

PM orders stern action against culprits

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has condemned the killing of seven people in a bomb attack on a cultural function at Jessore and asked the authorities concerned to take stern action against the culprits, reports BSS.

"Drastic action as per law will be taken against the criminals whoever they are," the prime minister said.

In a condolence message here yesterday, the prime minister prayed for the salvation of the departed souls and early recovery of the injured. She also conveyed her heartfelt sympathy to the members of the bereaved families.

UNB adds: Opposition Leader Begum Khaleda Zia was shocked by a bomb attack on a cultural function in Jessore.

"We suspect a deep-rooted conspiracy behind the bombings and killings designed for political aggrandizement, created."

See Page 12 Col 2

Govt to take over Kafco, if needed, says Tofail

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi

The government is willing to take over the debt-ridden, cash-strapped Karnaphuli Fertiliser Company (Kafco) if necessary but will not capitulate to undue threats from lenders and foreign shareholders, Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed told a crucial meeting yesterday.

In a strongly worded rejection of the proposed commercial settlement, the key element in the current crisis, the minister said the foreign shareholders were "free to buy the government shares to be in full control, sources said."

However, the minister later told The Daily Star that the meeting ended in a positive note with consensus on major points of dispute such as equipment problems and financial restructuring. "I am very happy, satisfied. We arrived at a consensus,"

he said, calling it a historic meeting.

"We all agreed to wait for the IFC (International Finance Company) report, its financial restructuring plans, technical audit on plant problems etc. We also agreed that Kafco would pay directly to BGSL (Bangladesh Gas Systems Ltd), instead of through BCIC."

But at the two-hour meeting, the minister dictated terms.

"If the government was to pay under the guarantees, the government could pay off all the lenders. The government could take over Kafco, and the foreign shareholders could sell their shares to the government," Tofail Ahmed was quoted to have told the meeting.

"Either the foreign shareholders should sell out their shares or the government

should be allowed to sell its shares and get out of Kafco."

He said the question could come up because Bangladesh had made no gains from the flagship, long portrayed as the test case for foreign investment into the country.

The minister began with his observation that the foreign shareholders had been taking the lion's share of the benefits from the US\$ 600 million project, while all risks and responsibility were on the government of Bangladesh.

"But now the lenders were knocking at the government's door, asking for payment under its guarantees," he was quoted as saying.

The meeting between the government and Kafco's foreign shareholders was convened by

See Page 12 Col 3

AL eyeing one-party rule: Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia has said the ruling party is conspiring to hold future national polls unilaterally to reintroduce one-party rule in the country.

Holding of municipal polls without the participation of the opposition parties clearly proved that it was also planning to hold the national elections keeping the opposition away so that they can capture power again, she observed.

"The Awami League will again amend the Constitution, as it had done in the past, to reintroduce one-party system after holding one-party polls," Begum Zia said when a delegation of Jatiyatabadi Ulama Dal led by its convenor Nazibul Bashir Matzbandari met her at her official residence yesterday evening.

The BNP chief said this conspiracy would destroy the country and its people and it must be resisted at any cost. This is why all patriotic citi-

zens and parties have to join the current movement by the Opposition.

Besides, the Ulama and Islamic scholars and thinkers will have to join the movement to foil all "evil designs" of this government, she added.

Turning to law and order, Begum Zia said lawlessness across the country has taken a serious turn and there is no security of life of the citizens.

On the incident in Jessore, she said several people were killed and an unspecified number of people injured in bomb explosions on the concluding day of national conference of Udichi.

Without directly blaming the ruling party for the incident, the BNP chief said Awami League has the past and present records of making bomb and armed attack on meetings and conferences.

Such incidents were taking place in many parts of the country in recent days. "The rulers

See Page 12 Col 6

Speaker rebukes Deputy Minister

By Staff Correspondent

Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury yesterday blasted Deputy Minister for Food Dharendra Debnath Shambhu for his 'misconduct' with the Chair.

Opposition BNP members protested the deputy minister's 'misdemeanour' for which Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed apologised on the ruling party's behalf.

But Shambhu claimed he did not find anything wrong in his conduct.

"Behave yourself, Mr. Minister ... You must not cast aspersions on the Speaker," an angry Chowdhury told Shambhu who shouted at the Chair when BNP lawmaker Mashur Rahman was on the floor.

Rising on a point of order, the opposition member was speaking about a number of issues including the killings in Jessore, alleged deterioration of law and order and reported fertiliser crisis in the country.

"Why don't you switch off his microphone?" an agitated

See Page 12 Col 1

Int'l Women's Day today

By Staff Correspondent

International Women's Day will be observed in the country today as elsewhere in the world with a renewed call to eliminate gender inequality.

This year's theme of the Day is "Equality of Rights in State and Family".

Various organisations including the International Women's Day Observance Committee (IWDOC) have chalked out elaborate programmes to observe the day. The programmes include women's rally, procession, discussion meeting and painting exhibition.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed in a message on the occasion called upon all concerned to play effective roles for women's development and their socio-economic emancipation under a national programme.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in her message called for greater coordination between government and non-

See Page 12 Col 7

Defence continues questioning Shazneen's father

By Staff Correspondent

Latifur Rahman, father of murdered teenager Shazneen, was cross examined by Mohammad Ali, lawyer of supervisor Badal, one of the accused in the Shazneen murder case, for the seventh day in the Metropolitan Sessions Judge Court yesterday. The cross-examination continued for more than one and a half hours starting from 11:50 am.

All the six accused were produced before the court yesterday. Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, youngest daughter of the Transcom Group chairman, was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23 last year. There was one case for murder and another for rape under the Woman and Children Repression Prevention Act 1995. Both cases were lodged with Gulshan thana

See Page 12 Col 2

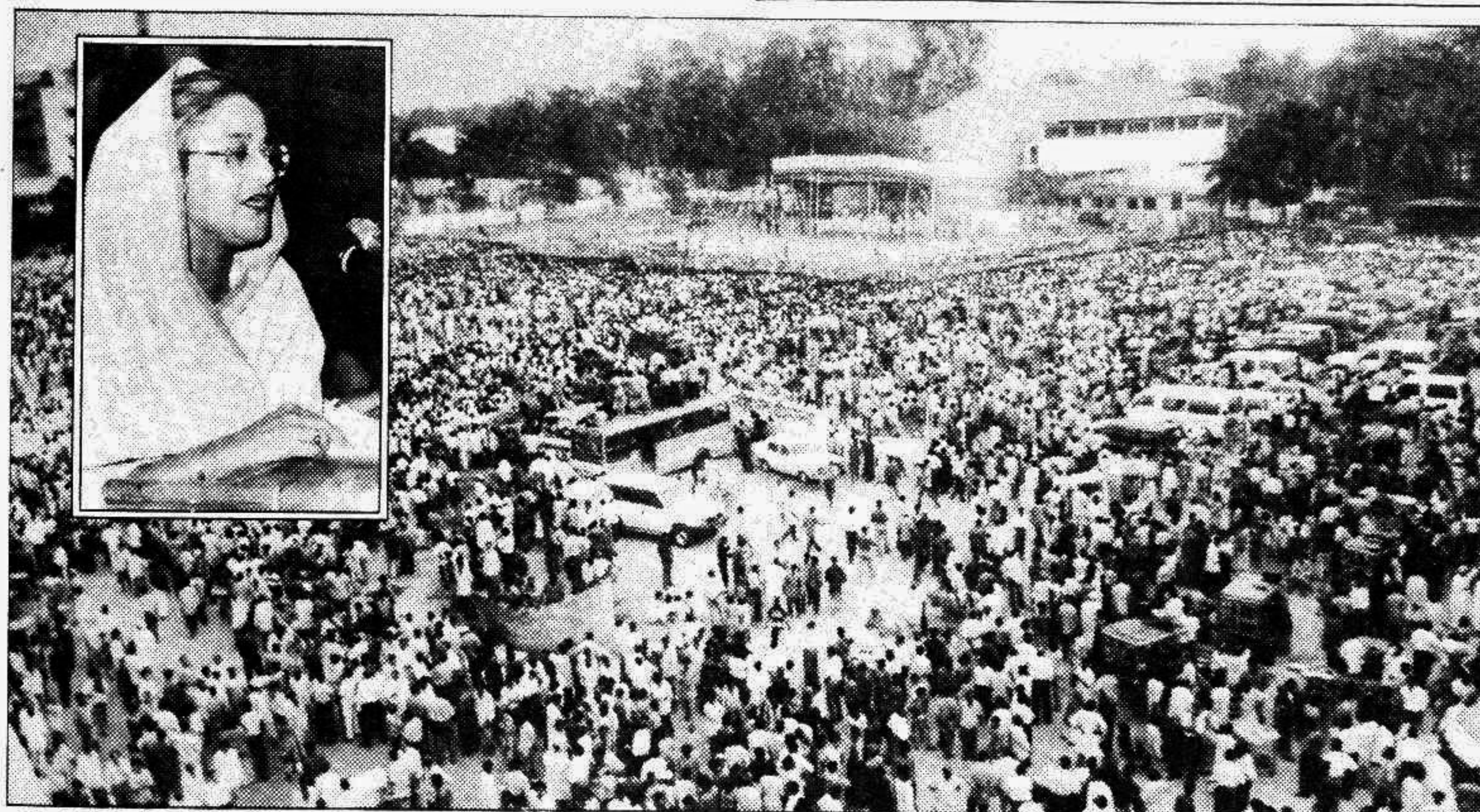
Correction

In our yesterday's story titled, "More women MPs in JS demanded," there was an inadvertent mistake.

In a sentence attributed to Zakia Chowdhury, secretary to the Prime Minister, it reads: "The government is working on it and there is reason to be frustrated."

The sentence should actually read: "The government is working on it and there is no reason to be frustrated."

The inadvertent omission is regretted.



Peripheral vision of a meeting arranged by the AL, held in remembrance of the historic 7th March speech by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina (Inset) is seen speaking at the function.

— Star photo

JU Hons classes of '97-98 begin today

Session jam eats up 19 months of their academic life

By Shamim Ashraf

First year honours classes of 1997-98 academic year of Jahangirnagar University (JU) begins today.

The classes were scheduled to start from August, 97, but has been delayed by 19 months due to session jam, official sources said.

But most of the newly admitted students have not got seats in dormitories of the residential university as those are occupied by Masters final examinees. Final examinations of only four departments out of 20 have been completed, the sources said.

A total of 1000 students have been enrolled in 20 departments for 1997-98 session. Of them, 928 are from merit lists and quotas for tribal students and sportsmen, 40 are wards of freedom fighters and 10 are

from the Vice-Chancellor's quota. The rest are wards of university teachers and employees, the sources said.

The first year students are facing a lot of problems due to lack of accommodation. Some students said they are sharing beds or rooms with others, while some others said they are sleeping on floors of guest rooms at their dormitories.

But all are very enthusiastic and eager to see classes begin in time. "We don't know why we are to lose the valuable time," one student said.

Asked about the session jam, Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the university Prof. Abdul Bayes said, "Teachers' irresponsibility in taking examinations timely is the main cause behind the severe jam. In some cases, students are also responsible.

Many teachers remain absent from classes for long without giving any explanation."

On the accommodation problem, he said, "It will not be possible to accommodate all the students initially as Master examinations of all the departments have not yet been completed."

"The university authorities may increase the number of bus trips between the campus and the city to facilitate students staying there (Dhaka)," he said.

A high official of the university said, the authorities will take steps to follow the academic calendar strictly to maintain the schedules for classes and examinations. Efforts will be made to complete the courses in nine months this year to reduce the session jam, he added.

Asian Test C'ship final Vaas, Aravinda in Arjuna doubtful

Sports Reporter

Aravinda de Silva, the injured Sri Lankan vice-captain, who missed the Asian Test Championship match at Lahore against Pakistan along with his skipper Arjuna Ranatunga, is likely to lead his country in the final against Pakistan to be held at the Bangabandhu National Stadium from March 12.

This was revealed by Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) general secretary Syed Ashraful Huq yesterday.

Talking to reporters, Ashraful, who had a talk with the Board of Control for Cricket in Sri Lanka, said that Aravinda was recovering fast from his groin injury and might lead Sri Lanka in the final.

Ashraful also said that veteran Sri Lankan captain Ranatunga's chances of playing at Dhaka was very slim. "He is yet to recover from his hamstring injury," said Ashraful who confirmed that left-arm pacer Chaminda Vaas would be playing in Dhaka.

Toshiba Wins First Prize



Toshiba electronic household durables of world renown and latest technology in Rangs Groups pavilion have won the first prize at DTF-99. Rangs Groups Pavillion gorgeously displayed with Toshiba colour TV, Fridge, VCD and Air-conditioners in addition to world renowned Canon Cameras, Pioneer Hi-Fi Audios, BPL TV & Audios, Mitsubishi Air-conditioners and portable generator sets drew the largest crowd in the fair ground. Also prominently displayed were Mitsubishi Lancer and Pajero vehicles alongwith the models of housing complexes of Rangs.

In the prize distribution ceremony in the evening of 7th March, the Crest and Certificate were awarded to Mr Rumee Hossain, Director of Rangs by honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Abdus Samad Azad. The honourable Minister Mr Tofail Ahmed was the special guest on the occasion.