

Tea planters seek financial assistance to overcome crisis

As the prolonged drought seriously hampered tea plants and its production, country's tea planters urged the government to provide a special credit of Tk 200 crore to overcome the crisis, the worst in 30 years, reports UNB.

Tea Association of Bangladesh (TAB) at a press conference in the city today (Sunday) said they are compelled to seek government assistance through the long-term development credit due to natural causes.

The TAB placed a four-point recommendation for the government's consideration that also included lowering interest on working capital loan from 11.5 per cent to 10.5 per cent and on the special development credit from 9.5 per cent to 9 per cent.

In another recommendation, it demanded construction of necessary embankments and water reservoirs, setting up deep tubewells and exempting duties from imported irrigation equipment to cope with such natural causes in future.

TAB chairman AQI Chowdhury told the newsmen that due to the drought, production of tea in January-April, 1999 would be 1,058 million kgs against 5,664 million kgs in the corresponding period last year.

"Normal rain has started to fall, but it will take time to get tea leaves at the expected level. Finally, the total production will be 20-25 per cent less than that of the last year causing cash losses of Tk 85 crore," he said.

According to the TAB figures, usually 10-15 inches rainfall occurs in the dry season in tea garden areas of Chittagong and Sylhet. In the current season, the rainfall was not more than one inch since November last year.

The export volume of tea was Tk 2,032.30 crore last year, which was 55 per cent higher than that of the previous year. But the exporters apprehended that this time exports would be less due to lower production.

Former chairperson of the TAB, Laila Rahman Kabir said that of some 5 lakh workers of 158 tea gardens, covering

48,416 hectares of land, will be at stake if the special development credit is not provided to the planters.

The government can provide the loan from the money that we are repaying against our previous loans taken in the early '80s under a rehabilitation programme funded by the British government and the European Commission," she said.

The former TAB chairperson said, "Country's tea industry gets Tk 175 crore as working capital loans from the Krishi Bank every year. The repayment rate is 98 per cent, which is satisfactory for the government and a pride for us."

"Despite satisfactory repayment, tea growers never sought extra facilities from the government. We are confident we will be equally able to repay the fresh loans," she said.

The hurriedly arranged press conference, called after meeting of the TAB, was also attended by its leaders and tea planters Zeba Rashid Chowdhury, Ahmed Shaif Chowdhury, M Yakub Ali and NU Khan.

Two more cases of suicide were recorded with the Mirpur and Daulatpur police on Feb 22 and 23.

Beauty Khatun, 22, wife of Aman Ali of Khursha village in Mirpur thana allegedly committed suicide by taking poison following a family feud.

Daulatpur thana police recovered the dead body of Shamsul, 22, in hanging condition from the Gorura village in the thana on Feb 23.

Rafiqul, 29, son of Shamsur of Vagiote village in Ramkrishnanapur union of the Daulatpur thana killed himself by taking poison on Feb 26.

Police sent all the dead bodies to the district General Hospital for autopsy.

Another incident of unnatural death was reported from Daulatpur police station on Feb 24.

Rani Khatun, 20, wife of Alim of Parshattal village in

Incidents of suicide on the rise in Kushtia

KUSHTIA, Apr 25: Incidents of suicide are on the rise in the district due to various social problems, reports UNB.

According to police sources, family feud, frustration in life and failure in love are the causes which provoked the victims to take to extreme path of life.

According to official sources, seven people allegedly committed suicide during the month of February this year. Rekha Khatun, 17, a daughter of Hafez Malitha of Chakdhar village allegedly committed suicide by taking poison on Feb 1, said police sources.

Three cases of suicide were recorded with the Kushtia thana on Feb 11. Two young girls and one boy included the victims.

Abul Kalam, 18, son of Abul Hossain of Harora village in Sadar thana committed suicide by hanging himself following a family feud.

Sukhi, 15, daughter of Shamsu Malitha of Lahinipara and Dolly, 13, of Harekrishnanapur village of Sadar thana also committed suicide by taking poison.

same thana died of food poisoning.

The father of the victim filed a murder case against his son-in-law suspecting his involvement with the incident. Police sent the dead body to General Hospital for autopsy.

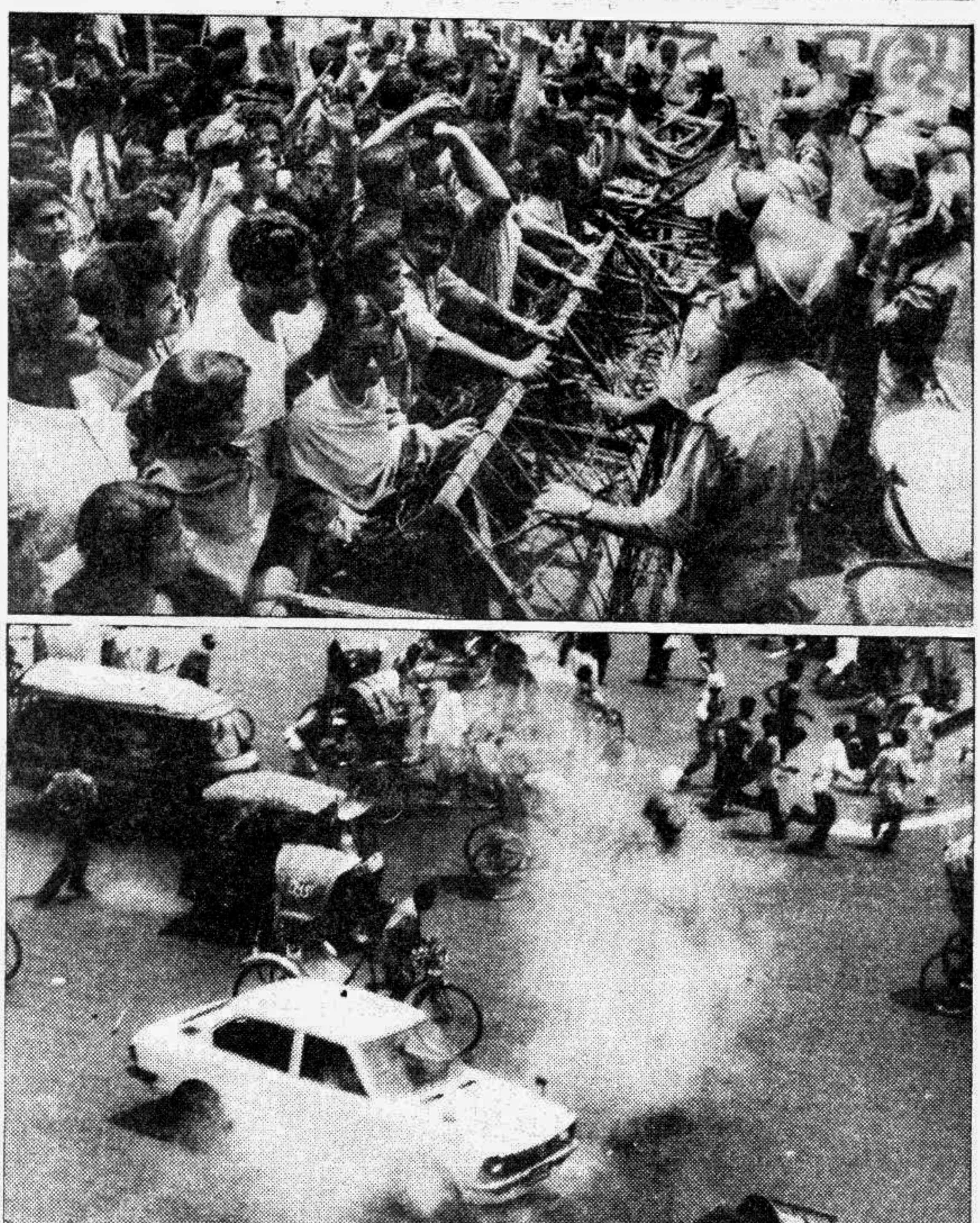
Top priority given to edn sector: Mannan

CHITTAGONG, Apr 25: Labour and Employment Minister M A Mannan said here yesterday that there was no alternative to education to build up a prosperous country and as such the present government has made highest budgetary allocation in this sector, reports BSS.

Addressing the foundation laying ceremony of academic building of Kuaish Sheikh Mohammad College under Haathajari thana here, the minister said education creates awareness among people about their own rights as well as the welfare of society. He said the present government does not believe in politics with religion and it never wants to close madrasa education in the country. The government has so far allocated Tk one crore for development of ten madrasahs in Chittagong district during current fiscal year, he said.

Presided over by the chairman of college managing committee and deputy commissioner of Chittagong Mohammad Hasan, the function was also addressed by general secretary of North District Awami League M A Salam and acting principal of the college Moazzem Hossain.

The new academic building of Kuaish College is being constructed by Facilities Department of Education Ministry at an estimated cost of Tk 30 lakhs.



(Top) Police intercepted a procession of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal activists in the Bangla Motor area when they were marching towards the PM's office yesterday. (Bottom) Some bombs were exploded in the area during the demonstration. — Star photo



A group of female workers of GSS brought out a procession in the city yesterday in support of Gono Shahajjo Sangstha (GSS) management. — Star photo

Week-long programme on poet Nazrul begins today

By DU Correspondent

A week-long programme to mark the birth centenary of Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam will be begun today at the Teachers and Students Centre auditorium of the Dhaka University.

This was decided in a meeting of Nazrul Janmo-Shatobarsiki Ujjayan Committee (NJUP) on Saturday. The committee also decided to publish a commemorative book on Poet Nazrul.

Presided over by Prof A K Azad Chowdhury, the meeting was attended by Prof Rafiqul Islam, Prof M Moniruzzaman, Prof Anisuzzaman, Prof Sayed-Ur-Rahman and other committee members.

Meanwhile, 'Dipta' a cultural organisation has undertaken an initiative to make a documentary film on Poet Nazrul titled 'Bidrohi Bulbul'.

GSS director begins talks with agitating workers

By Staff Correspondent

A process of negotiation between the Executive Director of the Gono Shahajjo Sangstha (GSS) and the agitating workers started yesterday, with writer Selina Hossain mediating.

Selina Hossain happens to be a member of the executive committee of the GSS — one of largest NGOs of the country which has recently been closed down due to fund constraints.

Meantime, a large number of GSS workers have been demanding resignation of its Executive Director Dr F R Mahmood Hossain on allegations of various irregularities.

Another group taking the side of Dr Hassan, however, claims that the agitating workers were busy conspiring against the GSS to destroy the organisation.

This group in a press conference held yesterday morning said that they have also some grievances against the GSS management. But they believe that it is possible to resolve the problems within the frame work of the GSS.

However, there had been no substantial progress in the process of Selina Hossain brokering the negotiation yesterday.

But sources close to both the groups told The Daily Star that they would continue the discussion.

BCSIR exhibition opens in city

A two-day exhibition organised by BCSIR began in the city yesterday to introduce its latest scientific innovations and inventions to the wide sections of the public, reports APB.

Inaugurating the exhibition, Science and Technology Minister Mohammad Noor Uddin Khan called for expansion of scientific and technological research to accelerate development of the country.

He urged the scientists to inform the people about their invention and progress attained in the field and said that the government had provided maximum budgetary allocation to the sector to gear up research in science and technology.

Khan expressed hope that the allocation in the sector would be even higher next year.

Later, the minister visited the glass and chemicals division, arsenic filter, research project, pilot plant and development centre machine shop, glass and ceramic research experiment, glass blowing machine, sheet metal shop and plumbing shop laboratories.

Science and Technology Secretary Mohammad Fazlur Rahman, BCSIR Chairman Prof Mashuazzaman, and senior scientists attended the inaugural function.

Involve MPs in local dev work, JS body tells ministry

The parliamentary standing committee on the Establishment Ministry yesterday underscored the need for coordination among various cadres-services removing their disparities, reports UNB.

The meeting also asked authorities concerned to take necessary measures to involve the MPs in their local development projects and other related issues.

It also asked for sending the issue of the demands of Bangladesh Non-Cadre Officers Samity to the Administrative Reform Commission for scrutiny.

The meeting discussed the progress of the decisions taken in its earlier meetings.

Chairman of the committee and Establishment and Freedom Fighter Affairs Advisor to the Prime Minister Khandaker Asaduzzaman presided over the meeting.

Committee members Abdul Mannan, Dipankar Talukder, Prof M S Akbar, Ahsan Ahmed, Mohammad Abu Hena and Shah Mohammad Abul Hossain attended the meeting.

One held for involvement in DU stabbing incident

By DU Correspondent

Police yesterday arrested one Md Zakir Hossain from Mohamadpur area for his alleged involvement in the stabbing of a student at Surya Sen Hall of Dhaka University.

Munshi Mohammad Selim, an M Phil student under the Department of Finance and Banking, was stabbed allegedly by a group led by Zakir, a third year student of Economics, when he was sleeping. He was undergoing treatment at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) till last night.

According to the Mohamadpur police, Zakir was nabbed from his residence at Salimullah Road and handed over to the Ramna thana. He lodged a case with the police station, they added.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, Ramna police said that Zakir will be placed before court today.

Meanwhile, pro-government student organisation Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and left leaning Samajatrik Chhatra Front (SCF) yesterday condemned the incident in separate statements.

The SCF demanded trial and exemplary punishment of those involved in the incident.

Claiming that the victim was a leader in their group, BCL claimed that the alleged attackers were not related with their organisation. They hailed the authorities for suspending the seven students involved with the incident and demanded immediate trial.

DU registered graduates' meet tomorrow

A general meeting of Ganotantrik Oikya Parishad, a forum of Dhaka University registered graduates, will be held tomorrow at 4 pm at TSC Cafeteria, reports BSS.

The meeting will discuss the matters relating to the upcoming elections to the senate and nominations of 25 representatives from the registered graduates on behalf of the forum.

Advocates Syed Ahmed and Waheduzzaman Chaud, Convener and member secretary of the forum, have requested all concerned including the intending candidates for elections to the senate to attend the meeting on time.

Ganotantrik Oikya Parishad, which upholds the ideals and spirit of the war of liberation as well as Bangalee nationalism, had bagged all the 25 seats in the Senate elections held in 1996.

Shanti Nibas project to be implemented by July

A high level meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair yesterday decided to start implementing the Tk 10 crore 'Shanti Nibas' project by July next, reports BSS.

The project aimed at ensuring housing, security and rehabilitation of distressed and disabled persons above 60 is expected to be completed by the year 2000.

Undertaken by the Ministry of Social Welfare, the project is also aimed at housing the orphans and destitute children so that they can get a sense of family care and affection living together with the elderly people.

Initial arrangements will be made for accommodation of 600 families in the 'Shanti Nibas' which is to be constructed across the country in barrack-style.

The prime minister directed the concerned agencies to ensure income generating facilities with the project so that the inmates can gradually achieve self-reliance.

She also directed the concerned authorities to ensure education programmes for the children of Shanti Nibas. Having completed their education the children themselves can then become trainers, she said.

Minister of State for Social Welfare Dr Mozammel Hossain, member, planning commission Enamul Haq and secretary of the ministry Khanada Mohan Das were among others present at the review meeting held at the prime minister's office.

Price-hike of fertilizer hit farming in Panchagarh

PANCHAGARH, Apr 25: [RR]-boro farming is being affected adversely due to price hike of fertilizers in the district, reports UNB.

The farmers have cultivated Boro on a vast tract of land in the district exceeding the target, but most of the farmers may not be able to harvest their desired crops due to fertilizer crisis.

Meanwhile, taking advantage of the situation, a section of traders have been selling the adulterated fertiliser to the farmers as the officials concerned failed to monitor and distribution system.

Food Minister Matia Chowdhury in a cabinet meeting recently also directed the authorities concerned at the district headquarters to take proper action against those responsible for creating artificial crisis of fertilizer and maintain the flow of supply properly.

But the authorities concerned here are not taking appropriate measures against the dishonest fertilizer traders.

Agriculture Extension Department sources said [RR] Boro on 15,000 hectares of land in Boda, Tetulia, Debiaganj, Atowari and sadar thanas have been cultivated in the current season.

According to market sources, per 50 kg bag urea fertilizer is being sold between Tk 310 and Tk 325 which is beyond the reach of the poor farmers.

Local farmers alleged that some dishonest traders have been creating artificial crisis of fertilizer to earn a windfall profit.

AL leader dead

Muhammad Abdul Gafur Master, president of Kutubkhali North unit Awami League under Demra Thana, died of old age complications on Friday at his residence in the city. He was 70, reports BSS.

He left behind his wife, five sons, three daughters and a large number of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

Mayor of Dhaka and president of Dhaka City Awami League Muhammad Hanif and State Minister for Shipping and General Secretary of the city unit Awami League Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Moya in a condolence message yesterday expressed their deep shock at the death of Abdul Gafur Master.



Nazrul's qul today

By Staff Correspondent

The quikhwam of Nazrul Islam will be held today at his Gulshan residence after Magreb prayers.

Nazrul Islam had a distinguished career in the foreign service and served as the Foreign Secretary. He was also the country's ambassador to the former Soviet Union, Kuwait, former Yugoslavia, Pakistan and Thailand.

He was BNP chairperson's advisory council member.

Born in 1932, he was the fourth son of Janab Sikander Ali of Karimpur in Narsindi district. He joined the foreign service in 1956 and received professional training at the Fletcher College of Diplomacy in the US.

He is survived by his wife Shahnaz Islam and a daughter Nadia and a grandchild Nadeev.

Ershad wishes to contest polls from Sylhet

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Apr 25: Former President and Jatiya Party Chief H M Ershad has expressed desire to contest from 5 constituencies of Sylhet region in the upcoming elections.

He was addressing a big gathering at the Chhatra thana headquarters of Sunamganj district this afternoon with local JP president Advocate Abdul Quaiyum in the chair. It was also addressed among others by JP Rahman Manju, JP MP from Derail and Sylhet thanas Nasiruddin Chowdhury, JP MP from Rangpur Abdul Karim Barahara, former Minister Major (Retd) Iqbal Hossain Chowdhury and district JP leader Advocate Abdul Jahur.

528 gets junior scholarships in Barisal

BARISAL, Apr 25: A total of 528 students including 190 girls have been awarded junior scholarships in six southern districts under Barisal division this year, reports BSS.

According to an official source, of the total, 149 students have been awarded talent-pool junior scholarships while 379 students general junior scholarships.

The value of each of the talent-pool scholarship is Tk 200 per month along with a lump-sum grant of Tk 400 and that of the general scholarship is Tk 80 per month along with a lump-sum grant of Tk 120, the source said.

The tenure of this scholarship is two years.

Of the total, 164 scholarships are awarded in Barisal district, 52 in Jhalakati, 102 in Pirojpur, 86 in Patuakhali, 68 in Bhoila and 56 in Barguna districts.

French navy frigate arrives at Ctg port

A French navy frigate La Fayette arrived in Chittagong yesterday morning on a five-day goodwill visit to Bangladesh, says a press release.

The frigate has a complement of 17 officers, 108 under trainee officers and 33 sailors.

During her stay in Bangladesh she will take part in joint exercises with the Bangladesh Navy Ships in the Bay of Bengal. Moreover, a Panther Helicopter of the French Navy which is on board the French frigate, will put up static display and flight demonstration at the M A Hannan International Airport. The French Navy personnel will also visit Naval Academy and other BN training establishments and Naval units in Chittagong and Kaptai area.

The Commanding Officer of the ship is scheduled to call on the Mayor of Chittagong City Corporation and senior army, navy and air force officers in the Chittagong area.

Spare parts of foreign watches seized from Satkhira

SATKHIRA, Apr 25: Anti-smuggling task force seized huge quantity of spare parts of Japan made watches worth over Tk two lakh from a night coach and arrested one person in this connection on Friday night, reports BSS.

Kalaroa thana police said, acting on a tip-off, the anti-smuggling task force members raided a Satkhira-bound night coach from Dhaka near Elishapur area under Kalaroa thana and seized huge quantity of spare part of Japa-made watches hidden in a bag and arrested one Mahub Alam of Indra village under sadar thana.

A case was filed with Kalaroa thana in this connection.

Flood shelter centres to be set up in Tangail

TANGAIL, Apr 25: Government has taken up a programme to establish one primary school-cum-flood shelter centre building in each eleven thanas of the district, reports BSS.

Official sources said that taka seven lakh and forty six thousand will be spent as the construction cost for each of it.

The work will be implemented by US-aid under pl-480 under the supervision of LGED and will be completed within four months time.

Huge fire-arms seized in Sirajganj

SIRAJGANJ, Apr 25: Sirajganj police recovered huge quantity of fire-arms during last three months from different parts of the district, reports BSS.

According to police sources, a total of 57 fire-arms including five cut-rifles, 36 pipe-guns, six pistols, one revolver, two sub-machine-guns, three country-made pistols and four country-made guns were recovered from nine thanas of Sirajganj district.

Sirajganj police also arrested 217 persons from nine thanas during the period.

Kader Siddiqi convenes FF's confce today

Kader Siddiqi, Bir Uttam, MP, has convened a special meeting of the Freedom Fighters (FFs) of the country at 11 AM today at the auditorium of Engineers' Institution here, a Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad (BMS) press release said, reports BSS.

The BMS has called upon the freedom fighters across the country irrespective of party affiliations to make the rally convened by Siddiqi a success.

More colleges needed in Thakurgaon

THAKURGAON, Apr 25: About 2000 students of the district who passed HSC examination in 1998 are facing problems in getting admission for higher studies in the area, reports BSS.

11,838 students appeared in the last HSC examination, out of which about 5,000 students have come out successful. There are eight degree colleges in the district including Thakurgaon Government College, where Honours courses in seven subjects are available only.

The National University in a letter informed the degree colleges of the district not to admit more than five hundred students in each college in the present academic session considering the infrastructure, number of teachers, classroom accommodation and other educational facilities of the existing degree colleges, the National University took this decision to create congenial atmosphere of education.

In the eight degree colleges of the district about 3,000 students can be admitted in the Honours and Pass courses. The remaining 2,000 have no option.

Aggrieved students and guardians have demanded new colleges of the district seek affiliation of National University to open degree courses from the present academic session so these students don't lose an academic year.

The guardians, students and teachers also urged upon the National University authority to give affiliation to these colleges who have already sought affiliation for opening degree courses.

Govt college teachers' confce held in Faridpur

FARIDPUR, Apr 25: The district conference of Bangladesh Government College Teachers' Parishad, Faridpur unit was held on Friday at the local government Rajendra College premises, reports BSS.

More than one hundred government college teachers of this district attended the day-long conference to discuss the present condition of college education in the country and other matters related to the interests of the government college teachers.

Prof Ali Akbar Khan Doller, president of Bangladesh Government College Teachers' Parishad attended the conference as the chief guest while Prof Shahjahan Mia, secretary general of the parishad central committee was the special guest.

The inaugural session was presided over by Prof Md Abdur Rob, convener of the district ad-hoc committee.



The official prize distribution ceremony of the Scancement 'Sit-and draw' competition was held recently. General Manager Martin Schjolberg, Scancement Bangladesh Limited, Marketing and Sales Manager Christer Eriksson, Marketing Executive Ashrafal Amin (Badal), Assistant Marketing Executive Limi Mostafa were present at the ceremony. Rokonzaman Khan (Dadabhai) and Syed Abdul Karim were also present on behalf of Kendria Kanchi-Kanchar Mahala.

Speaker returns

Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury returned home yesterday from Russia after a 10-day visit there as leader of the parliamentary delegation of Bangladesh, reports BSS.

Chowdhury, during the visit, held talks with eminent personalities of Russia. He held talks with Mikhail Krotov, General Secretary of the Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Countries on April 22.