

Two-day confce on committee system concludes Amendments to constitution proposed

A two-day conference on committee system concluded here yesterday mooting some proposals, including constitutional amendments, for strengthening the role of parliament and parliamentary bodies, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the conference at International Conference Centre on Thursday underlining active cooperation of all in making parliament effective.

The concluding panel of the conference, chaired by Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid, dealt with the importance of introducing gender balance in the membership of the House.

Barrister Rabia Bhuiyan MP proposed 14th amendment to the constitution providing that one-third of the constituencies be chosen by the Electoral Commission for women guaranteeing that a third of the future members of parliament will be women.

Prof Panna Kaiser described the evolution of the role of women since the days of the Liberation War, where women participated as actively as men.

to the gains they scored in increasing women's participation in the local government.

The second day of the conference started yesterday with a more technical approach to the functions of the committees in the approval and oversight of the budget.

Prof Ali Ashraf MP presented the topic demanding more power and the definition of a clear status for the committee chairpersons.

Talking on the comparative constitutional law regarding Committees Prime Minister's Parliamentary Adviser Suranjit Sengupta MP strongly defended the Bangladesh system as the most powerful after the American Senate.

UNDP international parliamentary expert Martinez Soliman exposed the actual status of the Parliament Committees in the Western countries and said in the modern sense a Parliament without Committee System is not a Parliament in its true sense.

Veteran parliamentarians and former Speaker Sheikh Razzaque Ali MP and Rahmat Ali MP suggested that the com-

mittee chairperson should act in fairness, impartiality and neutrality so the committees could play their role properly.

Earlier on Thursday, the working sessions began immediately after the inauguration of the conference where Nurul Islam Nahid MP suggested that improved supports should be made available to the committees so as to improve their effectiveness.

Khalequzzaman MP proposed that mandatory vote of the members with their party should be limited to major issues like a confidence motion or election of the Speaker.

Adviser to the Speaker and UNDP parliamentary consultant Khondoker Abdul Haq Miah suggested that there should be either an increase of staff or a reduction in the number of committees in the House when they clearly overlap the functions.

The conference was attended by MPs, university teachers, representatives of various institutions such as the Bangladesh Bar and relevant NGOs.

More pro-people budget this year: Zillur

RAJSHAHI, May 28: LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman said here today that the government would present a more pro-people budget this year with guidelines for economic emancipation and overall development of the country, reports BSS.

The Awami League government presented three pro-people budgets in the last three years," he said addressing a rally organised by Mohonpur Thana Awami League.

Rahman said opposition leader Begum Khaleda Zia would hardly get any chance to do politics cashing in on budget as it will be for the welfare of the people.

The minister requested the leader of the opposition not to be impatient for power and said the general election would be held after the five-year tenure of the present government.

"People would decide through ballot who would come to power next," he said.

The minister said the threat of launching political movement or false campaign against artificial crisis would be useless against the popular Awami League government.

Referring to different welfare activities of the present government, he said radical steps were taken for ensuring development of the country along with the welfare of the people in last three years.

The LGRD Minister said the government took different positive initiatives including the signing of the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty with India, the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Accord, employment banks for the unemployed, and allowance for the elderly for building a poverty and illiteracy-free Bangladesh as dream of by Father of the Nation.

The minister later inaugurated Keshorehat-Bhabaniganj road.

CMC Ist year MBBS classes begin today

From CU Correspondent CHITTAGONG, May 28: Classes of the first year MBBS (1998-99) of Chittagong Medical College (CMC) will begin from tomorrow, said a CMC press release yesterday.

The college has arranged a reception-cum-coordination meeting on the same day. Newly-admitted students, their guardians and teachers have been invited to attend the function.

University after Nazrul's name to be set up in Trishal

TRISHAL, (Mymensingh), May 28: State Minister for Land Rashed Mosharrar has said a university would be set up after the name of Kazi Nazrul Islam at Darirampur, a place bearing the memories of the national poet, reports BSS.

The work on the university would start by June, he said while speaking at the concluding ceremony of the three-day Nazrul's birth centenary functions on Wednesday.

Chaired by Deputy Commissioner of Mymensingh Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, the function was addressed, among others, by Hafez Mohammad Ruhul Amin Madani, MP, the university implementation committee leader Rashedul Hassan Shelly, and peasant leader Ashraf Haq.

Kader Siddiqui blasts govt for deteriorating law, order

From Our Correspondent NETRAKONA, May 28: Ruling party lawmaker Kader Siddiqui today criticized the government for what he said, its failure to contain deteriorating law and order situation in the country.

"This government is taking the nation to brink of collapse," said Siddiqui while addressing a freedom fighters' rally at Shaheed Minar premises in the town.

Siddiqui, who has already caused much ink among Awami League rank and file by some recent moves, once again blasted the administration of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina saying that country achieved no progress over the last three years.

He was critical of incidents like killings, rapes, illegal toll collections and police atrocities on women.

One killed in Tanbazar brothel

From Our Correspondent NARAYANGANJ, May 28: Police arrested one Jahangir alias Kalu from the Tanbazar brothel for killing a pimp in the early hours of today.

Kalu hit Mala, 30, with a broken coca cola bottle as she refused to let him go without paying money to a sex worker, police said.

Mala was rushed to the Narayanganj hospital but the doctors declared her dead. Her body was sent to the Narayanganj General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Earlier, Jahangir served a nine years imprisonment for killing another Tanbazar sex worker in 1988.

S Asian countries fail to reach consensus over proposed TAR routes

By Staff Correspondent

The proposed Trans Asian Railway (TAR) became uncertain yesterday as a few South Asian countries failed to reach a consensus over routes to be used in the TAR Southern Corridor.

The problem arose when India rejected a Bangladeshi proposal of regional connection with Nepal through Birganj of Nepal — Roxsuli-Singabadi of India via Bangladesh's Northern Rohanpur regions, sources at the Regional Policy Level Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on TAR said. Some experts on South Asian Region discussed various issues relating to TAR in a four-day long meeting that concluded yesterday.

During the meeting, India wanted to be connected through Nepal, Patna via Calcutta and Bangladesh's Darshana-Shahbazzur route.

On this point India said there is enough room to operate on the route, because of internal constraints. On the other hand Bangladesh said, it would not allow to use Darshana-Shahbazzur link of the interna-

tional route until it was allowed the regional link with Nepal, the source said.

Bangladesh would need to construct more 400-kilometre new rail line if it agrees with Indian proposal, Bangladesh Railway experts said at a press conference.

"Bangladesh would lose huge business of Nepalese containers if it agrees with Indian proposal, which is also the main motive of India," an expert said on condition of anonymity.

The international route would go through Bangladesh Multipurpose Bridge, experts said.

Meanwhile, Pakistan pointed that it would not allow its link in the TAR as it was not allowed to connection in eastern region. Pakistan is mulling business with Bangladesh through the TAR.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Railway experts told a press conference that it was largely depending on the consensus of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal.

However, there was a con-

sensus on the ESCAP proposed 11,705-kilometre route alignment of the main TAR SC originating from Kunming in the Southern Yunnan province of China passing through Myanmar, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Iran and Turkey extending up to Bulgaria in Europe.

"But some sections of this internationally significant rail route passing through India and Bangladesh and Nepal would require further examination and discussion for conclusive decisions," Dr M Rahmatullah, Director Transport of ESCAP told at the press conference.

Bangladesh has multiple choices to be connected with the TAR, a proposed railway link between South Asia and Europe and Thailand and Europe over overall distances of around 13,000 kilometres.

Bangladesh could be linked with Tamu of Myanmar through North-eastern Sylhet district. There is another option to connect Myanmar through the Bangladesh's South-eastern Teknaf end, the experts said.

But there is some problem due to hilly lands and political insurgency in Arakan province.

South Asian experts in the EGM tried to find ways and means to evaluate the development and operation of a network of routes through railway transport between South Asia and Europe to facilitate unhindered travel and transportation for fostering socio-economic uplift of the regions.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hassan Chowdhury while addressing the concluding session hoped that the South Asian countries would leave their rigidity to pave the way for the TAR.

While the concluding ceremony was also attended by Economic Relation Division (ERD) Secretary Masihur Rahman and other high railway officials.

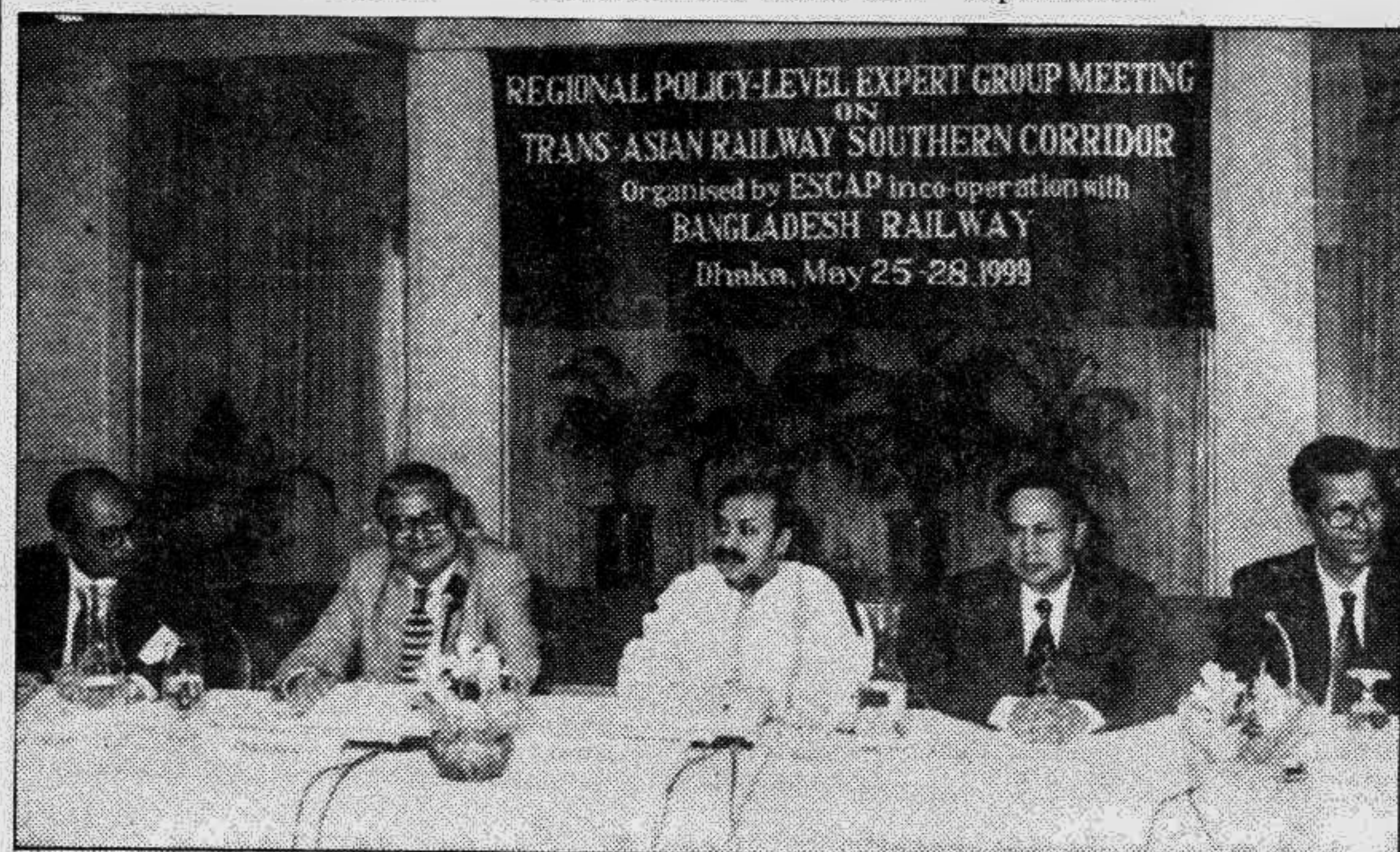
Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad inaugurated the regional policy-level expert group meeting in the capital participated by delegates from China, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey and host Bangladesh. Observers from World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), Asian Institute of Land Transport and ESCAP are also participating in the meeting.

"These routes would run via Myanmar, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey," another expert said.

The EGM adopted an action plan to follow up the various recommendations put forward at the meeting. The EGM has also agreed to establish a special "working group" involving the concerned countries to pursue the action plan, speakers at the press conference said.

Bangladesh has also been developing its road networks in the light of the proposed Trans Asian highway which was planned to link several Asian countries from Turkey to Malaysia.

The delegation on the return to respective countries would pursue with their respective governments to obtain endorsement on the routes recommended and the action plan adopted in the EGM, ESCAP sources said.



State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hassan Chowdhury addressing the concluding session of the Regional Policy-level Expert Group Meeting on Trans-Asian Railway Southern Corridor at a city hotel yesterday.

What's on today

Memorial lecture: The English Department Alumni Society of Dhaka University is hosting the Jyotirmoy Guhathakurta Memorial Lecture. Prof Dr Serajul Islam Chowdhury will deliver the lecture on "Secularism and the Bengali Middle Class." Venue: Natmandal of Dhaka University. Time: 4:30 pm.

Special AGM: A special annual general meeting of the Customs House Commissionerate Committee of Dhaka-Rajshahi Customs, Excise and Vat Executive Officers' Association will be held. A new executive committee of the association will be formed at the end of the AGM. Venue: The conference room of Dhaka Customs House. Time: 3:30 pm.

Rotary Club meet: The regular weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka Central will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club Ltd. Time: 1:30 pm.

Noor Uddin tells scientists Develop cheaper devices to use solar energy

By Staff Correspondent

Minister for Science and Technology Lt. General (ret'd) Mohammad Noor Uddin Khan yesterday called upon the scientists to develop cheaper solar photovoltaic devices so that the poor can have an access to alternative sources of energy in the face of acute power crisis.

Inaugurating a three-day international workshop on "Dissemination of Solar Photovoltaic Energy in Bangladesh" at the LGED auditorium in the city yesterday, the minister stressed on collaborative effort by the public and private sectors to make renewable energy devices popular and motivate people to use it. He assured all kind of government support for enterprises developing solar photovoltaic devices and popularising it.

Jointly organised by Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS) and Local Government Engineering Department, the workshop was presided over by PDB chairman Quamrul Islam Siddique while BCAS executive director Dr Saleemul Haq, director Dr Atiq Rahman and LGED chief Engineer Monwar Hossain Chowdhury took part in the discussion.

Noor Uddin Khan said solar energy could be an effective alternative in remote villages, islands and hilly areas where conventional electricity supply system is difficult to be reached.

"But it should be cheap and the scientists, researchers and manufacturers should make concerted efforts to ensure its availability at low prices," he said.

Dr Saleemul Haq of BCAS said the solar energy was gradually gaining popularity, but more efforts have to be made for promotion and dissemination of this environment-friendly source of energy.

Quamrul Islam Siddique stressed on government patronisation for private sector working in the field. Pointing to providing "incentives" to the solar system manufacturers, Siddique said government support for accessibility to solar power systems would help change the lives of the poor in remote areas where electricity cannot be reached easily.

Some six organisations including LGED, Micro Electronics, CMES, Rahimafrooz, REB and Energy Systems have put their solar photovoltaic panels on display on the LGED premises. An LGED solar panel capable of producing 75 watts costs Tk 40,000.

A total of seven technical sessions will take place at the workshop which is being attended by more than 70 delegates comprising experts and entrepreneurs from the USA, India, Nepal and Bangladesh.

Lightning kills one in Naogaon

NAOGAON, May 28: A man was killed and two of his family members were injured when a streak of lightning struck them in Badaigachi thana on Sunday, reports UNB.

The dead was identified as Inser Ali, 52, of Uttar Adhampur village.

The injured — Ali's daughter Nargis Begum, 21, and his five-month-old granddaughter Barna — were hospitalised.

Tk 32.54cr training academy for women in Rangamati

RANGAMATI, May 28: The largest ever training academy for women will be set up in the district at a cost of Tk 32.54 crore, reports UNB.

This was disclosed by State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Prof Zinatunnesa Talukder while visiting the proposed site of the academy here recently.

The academy will be built on 20-acres of land.

Women and Children Affairs Secretary Prof Tahmina Hossain, Joint Secretary Shallen-dra Kumar Adhikari and Director General Nilufar Begum accompanied the minister during the visit.

Tk 8 lakh allocated for renovation of college buildings

JHENIDAH, May 28: The government has allocated Tk 8 lakh for construction and reconstruction of eight non-government college buildings in Jhenidah and Magura districts in the current fiscal year, reports APB.

Officials sources said an amount of Tk 1 lakh would be spent for each of the colleges.

The colleges are Mahtab Uddin Degree College, Moheshpur Degree College, Rotchandpur S D College, Adil Uddin College, Shaikpara D M College and Abdur Rouf College in Jhenidah and Banagati Degree College and Arpara Degree College in Magura.

The construction work under Facilities Department of the Ministry of Education will start soon and is expected to be completed by next June.

DB recovers huge quantity of drugs from Feni

FENI, May 28: Detective Branch of police have seized huge quantity of drugs including rectified spirit from different areas of the district and arrested 10 people in this connection, reports UNB.

Police sources said raiding the house owned by Shah Alam at Beparikona, they recovered 26 bottles of rectified spirit and arrested two drug addicts — Shah Alam and Rabiul on May 17.

On the confessional statement of Shah Alam, they raided Azad Homeo Hall at Station Road and New Azad Homeo Hall at Gudam Quarter the following day and recovered 299 grams of alcohol and 70 packaging materials.

Helal Uddin, Nur Nabi and Bibhut Bhushan were arrested for illegal drug trafficking from these shops. The owner of the shops remain absconding.

Earlier on May 16, police seized 9.35 grams of heroin from a grocery shop in the southern part of Baitush Sharif Mosque at Mohalpur and arrested the shop owner Nur Zaman.

Three people were also arrested and 81 bottles of phenisidyl recovered from Swarnapatti in Feni Bazar.

Another message from Jhalakati says: Phenisidyl and rectified spirit are being sold with impunity in different areas of the district before the nose of the law enforcing agencies.

Sources said about 5,000 youths of four thanas of the district have become the drug addicts because of its easy availability.

They said the intoxicants are available at different shops in the town at Shaheed Minar Road, Shaheed Sarani Road, Station Road, Nuton Kalabanga, Old College Road, Bishwa Road and Katpatti area.

Fish trader Liakat Ali and his two friends died after taking rectified spirit in Sadar thana and three others met the same fate in Nalchhiti thana recently.

BDR seizes Indian goods worth Tk 17 lakh

COMILLA, May 28: Bangladesh Rifles, in separate raids, seized Indian smuggled goods worth about Tk 17.61 lakh from different parts of the district in 20 days till May 20, reports UNB.

BDR 17 battalion recovered timbers worth Tk 3.22 lakh raiding Shiber Bazar, Miah Mazar and Noabazar areas in Choudagram thana on May 19.

Other goods including Indian sugar, ganja, phenisidyl, spices, fans and spare parts worth about Tk 14.38 lakh were seized from Bouara Bazar, Naynapur, Choudagram, Moimpur, Salda River, Shankuchail, Bibir Bazar, Baro Jala, Chandidar, Amangonda, Shiber Bazar, Khabera, Satkharia and Jagannath Dighi areas since May 1 to 20.

The goods were deposited with the local customs godown. Separate cases were filed with the police.

Workers Party's demonstration day today

By Staff Correspondent

Workers Party will observe "Black Flag Demonstration Day" across the country today to protest government's misuse and failure to resolve power and water crises as well as curbing terrorism.

As part of its programme, the Dhaka city unit of WP will assemble in front of their party office and bring out a black flag procession at 4:30 pm today.

Meanwhile, WP general secretary Rashed Khan Menon in a statement has called for launching an united movement to free the country from the prevailing situation created by the Awami League and to check the rise of communal forces.

He called upon party leaders and workers and all other countrymen to make today's programme a success.

3,122 VGF cards for tornado-hit villagers

PANCHAGARH, May 28: Some 3,122 VGF cards have been issued for the tornado-affected people of five unions in Sadar and Tetulia thanas, reports UNB.

Officials said each VGF card holder would receive 8 kg rice and 8 kg wheat for the months of May and June.

They said 830 cards were issued for Amarkhana Union, 952 for Haribhasha Union and 509 for Satma Union in Sadar thana and 322 for Bhazampur Union and 509 for Debnagar Union in Tetulia thana.

The VGF cards were allocated after State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Talukder Abdul Khaleque visited the areas hit by tornado on March 26.

Rotary Club donates \$1500 for Kosovar refugees

Rotary Club of Metropolitan Dhaka has donated US dollar 1,500 to Rotary International's fund to help the Kosovar refugees, reports UNB.

Nazma Khan, Khaleda Akhand and Fazel Rabbi, members of the club, at its Ladies Night function made the donation on Wednesday, says a press release.

This is part of US dollar 8,000 the Bangladesh chapter of Rotary International — District 3280 — has committed to Kosovo Refugee Relief Fund opened by Rotary International President James Lacey.

The club along with Ashfaq-Nazma Foundation presented a gold medal to Rtn Azizul Islam, a renowned flutist in recognition of contribution to cultural promotion.

Presided over by club President Farid Hossain, the function was attended by District Governor Rtn M A Awal and District Governor nominee Rtn M Ozair Farooq.

Death anniversary



Today is the 26th death anniversary of Shaheed Capt R A M Khairul Bashar who sacrificed his life during the Liberation War in 1971, says a press release.

Capt Bashar played a pioneering role in the Liberation War.

With the active participation, he inspired the students and the people to put up barricades on many strategic points on Chittagong.

However, at one stage Bashar was caught by Pakistan Army and was flown to Dhaka where they tortured him in a barbarous way.

On May 29, 1971 he was brutally killed by the occupation forces.

On the occasion of his death anniversary, milad mahfils have been arranged in Dhaka and at the Nilphamari residence of his father late Asir Uddin Ahmed, former Headmaster of Nilphamari High School.

DU Senate election campaign geared up

By Staff Correspondent

As the count down began, candidates vying for the 25 Registered Graduate representatives in the Dhaka University Senate elections scheduled for June 14-15, have further accelerated their campaign.

Candidates under the banners of two panels — Jatiyatabadi Oikya Parishad (JOP) and Ganotantrik Oikya Parishad (GOP) have further geared up their campaign as the date for the elections is knocking at the door.

The JOP is backed by BNP and its like minded political parties while GOP is supported by the ruling Awami League and some other left leaning parties.

Sources said both the panels are now holding separate projection meetings in city and other parts of the country almost everyday. Candidates are also making contact individually with the voters through appearing at the door step of homes or telephone.

The contesting candidates are mainly introducing themselves from their respective political identity, but many were seen trying to influence the voters through applying all possible means, including relativism and localism.

The JOP have launched campaign to drum up support in favour of its candidates with the pledges to restore the lost glory of the Dhaka University.

While the GOP in its campaign giving the commitment to build the DU to face the challenges of the twenty-first century through upholding the spirit of the liberation war.

Sources said both the JOP and GOP are also engaged in mudslinging against each other for jeopardising the image of the Dhaka University.

Meanwhile, the GOP held a projection meeting at TSC auditorium of Dhaka University yesterday afternoon with Prof MA Bari in the chair. Dr Sham-sul Huda Harun introduced the candidates before the audience at the function.

Speakers at the projection meeting called upon the voters to come forward unitedly with the spirit of the liberation war to defeat the reactionary forces through electing their 25 candidates.



Science Club Association brought out a colourful rally in the city yesterday to mark the Science Day '99. —Star photo

DUJ demands national press policy

The annual general meeting of Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) unanimously adopted a number of resolutions including the demand for framing a national press policy on Wednesday, reports BSS.

The meeting held with senior journalist Mizanur Rahman in the chair also approved the reports of the general secretary and the treasurer of the union.

The meeting demanded immediate implementation of the fifth wage board awards in all newspapers and news agencies. The meeting called upon the government to take effective measures including appointment of inspectors and formation of special court for implementation of the awards.

The meeting also demanded an end to all kinds of repression of journalists, illegal termination and retrenchment and payment of regular salary.

The meeting demanded two-day weekly holiday for newspaper industries, which the journalists are entitled to enjoy as per-law of the land.

Outgoing general secretary of the union Azizul Islam Bhuiyan and treasurer Rokeya Kamal placed their annual reports

1,172 held in city

A total of 1,172 people were arrested from the country's different parts, including four metropolises, on the 36th day of the joint operation of police, BDR and Ansar ul Friday morning, reports APB.

The law-enforcers also recovered 27 illegal firearms, 31 bullets and 10 explosive materials during the operation. The arrested included 645 wanted criminals.