

JS body reviews tea garden situation

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Land Ministry at a meeting yesterday discussed the illegal occupation of Tarapur tea garden in Sylhet, reports UNB.

It formed a five-member sub-committee headed by Majibur Rahman Talukder to investigate the matter and recommend measures within two months for proper management of the tea garden.

The meeting, held at Sangsad Bhaban with committee Chairman Talukder in the chair, also discussed the vested property issue and decided to invite some lawyers for their advice in the next meeting.

Committee members State Minister for Land Rashed Mosharraf, Enamul Haq, Prime Minister's Parliamentary Affairs Advisor Suranjit Sen-gupta, M Abdul Latif Siddique, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Shaikh Razzak Ali, Kabir Hossain and Salahuddin Ahmed attended the meeting.

Land Secretary Omar Farooq and senior officials concerned were present.

Take part in local polls, Zillur urges Opposition

KISHOREGANJ, June 25: LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman today urged BNP and other opposition parties to participate in the ensuing local elections, reports UNB.

Give up negative politics. Do participate in upazila and other local body elections," he called on the boycotting opposition while addressing a function on the occasion of installation ceremony of the chairman and commissioners of Kishoreganj poushava.

Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid was present at the function which was also addressed by MPs A K M Shamsul Haq, Dr Mizanul Haq and Syed Ashrafur Islam with poura chairman Nurul Islam in the chair.

Zillur, also General Secretary of the ruling party, categorically said with all conspiracies BNP and its anti-liberation allies would not be able to stop the victory march of Awami League which is now celebrating the golden jubilee.

"Three years of the present government are a success story. Awami League achieved the success by solving the problems created in last 21 years realising people's welfare programmes," he said.

The vested-interest groups had always conspired against the Awami League since its inception on June 23, 1949 as the party constantly worked for people's rights, he added.

"The vested-interest groups continued conspiracy and propaganda against the Awami League in last 21 years. And such conspiracies are also going on now as the present government earned successes in every sector," the minister further said.

Janaza of M R Chowdhury today

The namaz-e-janaza of country's leading immunologist and renowned physician Major General (Rtd) M R Chowdhury will be held today after Asr prayers at the Allah Mosque of Dhaka Cantonment, reports BSS.

He will be buried at the Armed Forces Graveyard in Banani.

General Chowdhury, president of Bangladesh Society for Immunology and chairman of the Technical Committee of the National AIDS died of cardiac arrest Thursday morning.



S M Tariqul Islam Shaikh Intiaz Shimul

New executives of DU Debating Society

By DU Correspondent

A 17-member Executive Committee of Dhaka University Debating Society (DUDS) for the year 1999-2000, was formed yesterday with S M Tariqul Islam, Liton and Shaikh Intiaz Shimul as president and general secretary respectively.

The other members of the committee are Md Abdul Ohab Shetu and Md Ashkur Rahman (vice presidents), Rashedy Romel Sana and Majibur Rahman Lavlu (joint secretaries), Amit Das Gupta (office secretary), Moin Uddin Sabuj (finance secretary), Rezaul Karim Sumon (publication secretary), Mahmud-Bin-Alam (international affairs secretary), Sabiha Rahman Shama (function secretary), Jakia Karim Sohana (training and liaison secretary), Rashedy Hafiz Rashel (publicity secretary), Abul Hasan Rubel, Shampa Saha, Rashedul Islam Rafi and Bulbul Hasan (executive members).

Literacy rate goes up to 56 pc

A series of measures undertaken by the government in the education sector during the last three years have brought about a qualitative change in this field, raising the country's rate of literacy to 56 per cent, reports BSS.

The changes, according to concerned officials, infused dynamism into the educational administration and system and its infrastructural development across the country.

One of the major successes of the government's persistent endeavours, they said, is the freeing of the five districts of the country from the curse of illiteracy. The districts are: Chuadanga, Lalmonirhat, Magura, Rajshahi and Gaibandha.

As recognition to the government's success in the field of education, the Primary and Mass Education Department received 'UNESCO International Literacy Prize' for outstanding contribution towards eradication of illiteracy in 1998. As regards the infrastructural development

of primary schools and 2292 primary schools have been set up across the country with a cost of Tk about 234.79 crore during the last three years.

Under the "women education" programmes, the government provided about Tk 482.20 crore as stipend to 78.50 lakh girl students.

The other steps included appointment of 14,915 assistant teachers, and 1485 headmasters in the government primary schools, and appointment of 175 Thana Education Officers (TEO) and 428 Assistant Thana Education Officer (ATEO). Tk 3941.86 lakh has also been given to 259 government and non-government colleges for purchasing scientific equipment, books and computer, and Tk 4193.75 lakh books, educational equipment and computers to 8880 schools and madrasahs in the last three years.

Sources at the Education Ministry said, "it has taken a

programme to introduce computer education course in the country's 154 government colleges."

The imparting of training to a total of 1,52,203 teachers of Secondary and Higher Secondary level and 1184 principals of different colleges had also been completed to improve quality of education.

Officials said the government's measures for expansion of higher education included initiatives to set up at least 12 Science and Technology Universities in the greater district headquarters, and 13 polytechnic institutes and 13 vocational training institutes.

They also said the government under its 'Satellite School Programme' has so far set up 2726 schools to provide education to children.

A programme has also been taken to introduce 'double shift' in 414 schools across the country to ease pressure of the students, the officials added.

JU admission tests begin July 12

By JU Correspondent

Admission tests for first year honours classes under the academic session 1998-99 at Jahangirnagar University (JU) will be held from July 12 to 20, official sources said.

Written tests of the departments of 'Statistics', 'Computer and Electronics', 'Chemistry' and 'Environmental Science' will be held on July 12; which 'Geological Science', 'Mathematics' and 'Physics' departments' tests are scheduled for July 13.

Tests of departments under Life Science Institute will begin July 14. Tests of 'Botany' and 'Zoology' departments will take the tests on July 14; while 'Bio-Chemistry and Molecular Biology' and 'Pharmacy' departments' tests will be held on July 15.

Tests of the departments under Social Science Faculty will begin July 17. The tests of the departments of 'Economics' and 'Anthropology' will be held on July 17; 'Government and Politics' and 'Geography' on July 18;

and 'Business Administration', and 'Urban and Regional Planning' on July 19.

Admission tests for the subjects under Arts faculty will begin July 19. Tests of 'International Relations' and 'English' departments will be held on July 19; and 'Philosophy', 'Archaeology', 'History' and 'Drama and Dramatics' on July 20.

The one-hour written tests will begin at 9:30 am everyday and will be held in shifts.

There will be a half-an-hour break between two shifts, official said.

All classes and examinations of the university will remain suspended during the period.

A total of 35784 students are vying for 660 seats in 24 departments under four units — 'Ka' unit (Science), 'Kha' unit (Social Science), 'Ga' unit (Arts and Humanities) and 'Gha' unit (Life Science). The ratio between the seats and admission seekers this year is about one to 54.

Barrister Shafiq Ahmed, Projonmo'71 honoured

Projonmo '71, an organisation of children of the martyrs of the War of Liberation, and Barrister Shafiq Ahmed have been honoured with the Jahanara Imam Award 1999 for their contribution to the movement against communalism, fundamentalism and war criminals, reports UNB.

National Professor Kabir Chowdhury announced the names of the recipients of the award at a discussion meeting at the TSC of Dhaka University on Thursday.

The award was introduced by Ekattur Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee, which was founded by late Jahanara Imam.

Nirmul Committee organised the meeting marking the fifth death anniversary of Jahanara Imam to be observed across the country today.

Nirmul Committee president poet Shamsur Rahman presided over the meeting.

It was addressed by Nirmul Committee Advisory Council President Kabir Chowdhury, Prof Borhanuddin Khan Jahangir, Prof Abdul Mannan Chowdhury, Shahriar Kabir, Shymoli Nasrin Chowdhury and Prof Mahfuz Khanam.



Islami Chhatra Majlish brought out a procession in the city yesterday on the occasion of Eid-e-Miladun Nabi. — Star photo

E Timor reconciliation talks begin

JAKARTA, June 25: Supporters and opponents of independence for East Timor wound up the first of six days of talks here Friday agreeing on the need for reconciliation between them for the future, reports AFP.

"In the concluding plenary session, both sides reached basic agreement on the necessity and definition of reconciliation," the spokesman of the steering committee for the church-organised talks, Father Domingos Sequeira said.

The talks between leaders of both camps, which for the first time included jailed leader Xanana Gusmao, elected to discuss reconciliation strategies before the more difficult issues of security and political arrangements, Sequeira said in a press release issued at the end of Friday's talks.

Gusmao, whose late arrival due to lack of official approval to leave his house prison delayed the opening of the meeting for three hours, stressed the value of peace and brotherhood in building a better future for the people of East Timor.

The talks were opened by the two Roman Catholic bishops of the former Portuguese colony — Dili's Carlos Ximenes Belo and Baucau's Basilio do Nascimento.

In his opening remarks, do Nascimento "stressed the importance of putting the interest of the East Timorese people before individual and organisational interest," Sequeira said.

Belo urged delegates "to cooperate to develop a culture of dialogue to seek what is good in the views of political opponents and to resist the impulse to dominate others."

The "Dare II dialogue and reconciliation conference," as the meeting is officially called, came as tension and violence between the two camps remained high since Jakarta said in January it may let go East Timor, which it annexed in 1976, if people there rejected its autonomy offer.

It also comes two months before a UN-conducted vote on whether Timorese want independence or autonomy under Indonesia.

In Dili where the first talks were held last September.

It will be held in two stages, with the first two days only involving 20 participants from East Timor. The four-day second stage to begin Sunday will include 40 participants from abroad.

Francisco Xavier Lopes da Cruz, chairman of the pro-Indonesia Front of the People of East Timor (BRTT), speaking for his camp, called on participants to "put aside differences and radicalism" in the cause of a better future for the people of East Timor.

UN representative Tamrat Samuel, who also attended the opening of the talks, urged both camps to renew their commitment to renunciation of violence as a means of achieving political ends and to the ongoing consultation process.

The first stage involves 10

representatives from each camp. They include Gusmao, head of the National Resistance Council of East Timor, the umbrella organisation of the East Timorese pro-independence movement, and two of its leaders, David Ximenes and Leandro Isaac.

Gusmao's camp also includes former MP Manuel Carrascalao, whose house in Dili was attacked by pro-Indonesia militia in April. His teenaged son and 12 other people were killed.

The pro-Indonesia faction is represented by da Cruz, Domingos Soares, who heads the Front for Peace, Democracy and Justice (FPDK), FPDK spokesman Basilio Araujo, and parliamentarian Armando Soares Mariano.

Starting Sunday, another 20 other leaders of each side, including exiles, will join the talks.

Lawyers accuse state of targeting Anwar unfairly

KUALA LUMPUR, June 25: The defence in Anwar Ibrahim's sodomy trial on Friday accused the state of targeting their client by browbeating his brother until he confessed they were both indulging in illegal sex and acts of sodomy, reports AP.

The lengthy confession by Anwar's adopted brother, Sukma Dermawan, is crucial to the prosecutors, who say that both men sodomised Anwar's former family driver, Azizah Abu Bakar, one evening in 1993.

Sukma made the confession last September after 14 days in solitary confinement. Although he served a six-month sentence on the basis of his confession, he later retracted it, saying he had been assaulted and coerced into making sexual allegations against the former deputy prime minister.

Anwar's lawyers have been arguing over the past week that the contents of Sukma's statements should be excluded from this trial.

Defence attorney Karpal Singh said Friday that the state resorted to questionable tactics to secure a conviction against Anwar and failed to do what was necessary for the court to determine whether Sukma made the confession voluntarily.

The target is not Sukma, the target is Dato Sri Anwar Ibrahim," Karpal said told the court, using the Malay title of respect. "This is the strategy of the prosecution by producing the confession."

Anwar, 51, denies the charge against him and says he was framed for challenging Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who dismissed him last September. Anwar is serving a six-year sentence for abuse of office for having demanded that police attempt to cover up his alleged sexual trysts.

On Friday, Karpal said that police repeatedly thwarted lawyers from meeting with Sukma during his detention last September. He also accused the magistrate, who took down Sukma's statement, of not taking necessary steps to ensure that Sukma had made the confession out of his own volition.



Visitors at the Sea Food exhibition that began at Hotel Sonargaon in the city yesterday. — Star photo

191 killed, 350 hurt across country last year: BRCT

Some 191 people were killed and over 350 others injured by law-enforcing agencies and during political clashes across the country since January this year, reports UNB.

This was stated by the leaders of Bangladesh Rehabilitation Centre for Trauma Victims (BRCT) at a press conference yesterday.

The press conference was organised at a local hotel on the occasion of United Nations Day in Support of the Repressed, to be observed today.

Giving details, the leaders said physical repression by the members of law enforcing agencies killed 15 people while 28 were shot dead by them. Twenty-five people died inside the prison during the period.

They also said that some 100 people were killed during political clashes among different parties and factions. Nineteen members of law-enforcing

agencies were killed while performing their duties and 117 others injured.

The leaders said they (members of law-enforcing agencies) raped 17 women and girls during the period while repressed 152 others.

They put forward 25 recommendations to stop any kind of repression in the country and demanded implementation of these recommendations. Besides, they said mass awareness should be created side by side the government efforts to stop repression.

BRCT President Dr Khalilur Rahman, General Secretary Akram Hossain Chowdhury, Medical Director Dr Md Ekramul Huq and Dr Md Khaleel were present at the press conference.

BRCT announced elaborate programmes including a street drama and rally to observe the day today.

Drawing exhibition

An exhibition of drawings by Thai children will be held at Islambagh Community Centre in the city at 6 pm today, said a press release.

Hazi Mohammad Selim MP will be present as chief guest while the Thai Ambassador in Bangladesh and the Chairman of BJMC will attend the programme, organised by United Jubo Sangsad, as special guests.

965 arrested, five firearms recovered

Nine hundred and sixth-five people were arrested and five illegal firearms seized on the 64th day of he countrywide combing operation by police, BDR and ansar forces yesterday, reports BSS.

Of them, 419 people are accused in a number of criminal cases. And 536 are wanted for different crimes. Nine terrorists were also arrested during the operation.

Demra school night guard found dead

By Staff Correspondent

A night guard of a school was found dead inside an auditorium of the school at Sarulia under Demra thana in the city yesterday morning.

Sadek Ali, 40, son of Shahed Ali, was the night guard of MA Sattar High School at Sarulia.

The body bore a mark of stab injury near its right ear and the hands and legs were tied with ropes, police said.

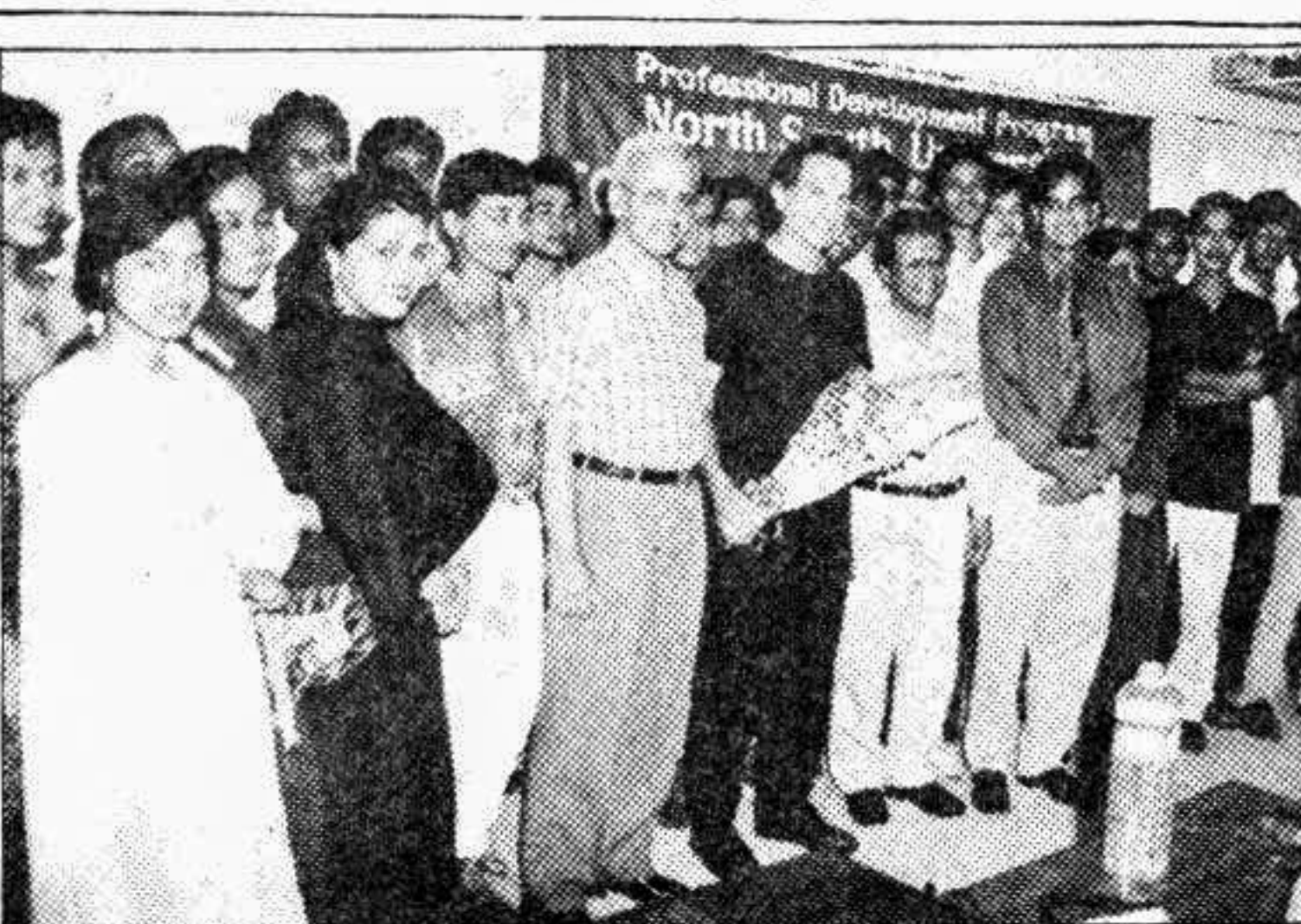
The killers took nothing from the school but ransacked the office room of the school.

Police suspect that the killing occurred at about 9:30 pm Thursday.

Rotary News

Meeting

The regular weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka Central will be held today at 1:30 pm at 'Surma' Dhaka Club Ltd. Rotarians are cordially invited to visit for make-up and fellowship. It will be a joint meeting with Rotaract Clubs of Wari Dhaka and City Central, says a press release.



Alan Stewart, a Hollywood celebrity, gave a presentation on Tobacco-free Initiative at North South University recently. He is seen with the NSU Pro-Vice Chancellor, Professor Hafiz G A Siddiqi and faculty-students after his presentation.



The Bangladesh-Thailand Friendship Association held its general meeting at the residence of Thai Ambassador in the city recently.

AL golden jubilee celebrations end

Curtain was drawn yesterday on the three-day golden jubilee celebrations of Bangladesh Awami League as enthusiastic activists of the party and its front organisations sang, danced, beat up drums and exploded firecrackers amid feverish euphoria that swept the country on the occasion, reports UNB.

Escorted by a flotilla of motorbikes, leaders and workers of the party, whose showpiece includes leading the country to freedom, stepped down from the huge celebration pandal at the Pallan Maidan to march through the streets.

Several decorated bullock carts and push vans carried boats, the party symbol, as activists robed in traditional rural outfit, staging mock boat rowing in the streets.

Senior leaders, including Amir Hossain Anu, Abdur Razak, Tofail Ahmed, Mojaffar Hossain Paltu, Sudhangshu Shekhar Haldar, Mohammad Hanif, Professor Abu Sayeed, Molazzam Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin and Sultan Mohammad Mansur Ahmed led the procession.

Elderly leaders and personalities, who witnessed the launching of the party in 1949 at the historic 'Rose Garden' in old Dhaka and were associated with its half-a-century journey amid twists and turns of the country's history, recollected their memories highlighting the struggle of the Bangladeshis.

The party leaders heaped accolade on their legendary predecessors including Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani,

Hussein Shahid Suhrawardy and Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who led the nation to independence from the Pakistani occupation forces in 1971.

Those who reminisced the party's opulent past and its journey down the lane of history's ups and downs included Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, Forest and Environment Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Health and Family Welfare Minister Salah Uddin Yusuf, Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak, Mayor of Dhaka Mohammad Hanif, State Minister for Shipping Molazzam Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Shamsul Huq, MP, former Chief Justice Kemal Uddin Hossain and language movement veteran Gazil Huq.

Convener of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations Committee and party's presidium member Amir Hossain Anu chaired the session.

Presidium member Zohora Tajuddin, Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed, State Minister for Information Professor Abu Sayeed whip Abdus Shaheed, State Minister for Textiles AKM Jahangir Hossain, State Minister for Jute AKM Faezul Huq and party leaders Shamsur Rahman Shahjahan and Mojaffar Hossain Paltu were prominent among those who attended the last day's discussion today.

Country's leading artistes and singers staged a colourful function in the pandal in the evening marking the end of the celebrations.

EU call for restraint

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Nawaz Sharif and conveyed a message from President Bill Clinton stressing the need to defuse the situation in Kashmir. General Anthony Zinni, commander-in-chief of the US Central Command who flew in Islamabad with Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Gibson Lanpher, also held talks with Pakistani army chief General Pervez Musharraf.

The talks ended with little hope for an early end to the fighting in Kashmir.

Sharif told Zinni the fighting in Kashmir was "symptomatic of the problems that have bedevilled Pakistan-India relations over Kashmir."

"Unless a peaceful solution of the Kashmir dispute was reached in the shortest possible time, situations like Kargil would continue to erupt, threatening peace and endangering the stability of the region," he said.

Meanwhile, Indian PM Atal Behari Vajpayee said today that India was in a position to defeat Pakistan Islamabad forced a third war over Himalayan Kashmir.

"If a war is thrust on us, we will fight with all our might, and we will win," Vajpayee thundered at a public rally in Patna, capital of the eastern Indian state of Bihar. These Pakistanis fight us again and again, and lose every time," he said to applause.

Vajpayee said New Delhi would resume its peace talks with Islamabad only after Pakistan withdrew the fighters who are occupying high altitude peaks along the cease-fire line in northern Kashmir.

He said Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had invited me for peace talks, and

now he has gone back on all we agreed upon."

AFP from Kargil adds: India today launched all-out attacks on a key Kashmir peak held by Islamic intruders as pressure grew on Pakistan to call back the fighters from the Indian sector of the disputed territory and end the nearly seven-week conflict.

The rivalry armies fought intense artillery battles in the plains and mountains of divided Kashmir as India claim it had "silenced" Pakistani batteries in the duels. Indian troops fired 155mm Bofors guns as the air force launched laser-guided bombs and armour piercing missiles on the 4,590 metre Tiger Hills mountain in the battle zone of Kargil.

"If we take a couple more features then the depth of the intrusion will reduce significantly," army spokesman Colonel Bikram Singh said in a reference to the ground and air attack on Tiger Hills.

Singh said the raiders occupying peaks across a 120-kilometre (72-mile) belt in Kargil had been pushed back by four kilometres (2.4 miles) from an incursion of eight kilometres; past the Line of Control (LOC), which divides Kashmir, since the operations began on May 9.

The Indian air force said the air raids, which began May 26 in Kargil, were yielding results. "It has degraded the fighting capacity of the enemy and boosted morale of our soldiers," a spokesman said.

Tiger Hills is near Tololing, a cluster of four peaks taken by Indian troops in 21 days of combat. It overlooks the Srinagar-Leh road which gives the Indian army access to the strategic Siachen glacier front.

Queen Noor pledges to support new royal couple

AMMAN, June 25: Jordan's Queen Noor, widow of King Hussein, moved today to dismiss reports of tensions within the Jordanian royal family, pledging to stand behind the new King Abdullah and his wife Queen Rania, reports AFP.

In an interview on CNN's Larry King Live, Queen Noor, stepmother to the new king, said she hopes "to be able to be a source of support and counsel for them as they embark on this new stage in their lives."

"I will continue ... to be as supportive as I can, of course, of

King Abdullah's work and also of the efforts that Queen Rania will make in the future," she said.

Queen Noor, who married King Hussein in 1978 when Abdullah was 16, said Abdullah is "like a son to me."

King Abdullah appointed his half-brother and Queen Noor's eldest son Prince Hamza heir to the Hashemite throne, soon as he became monarch, in line of King Hussein's dying wish.

But speculation on unease between the branches of the royal family began circulating in Amman and the world's press after Abdullah's enthronement ceremony earlier this month, attended neither by Queen Noor nor any of her four children, including the crown prince.

They were all out of the country. Queen Noor made a world tour of public appearances, Hamza training at Britain's Sandhurst Military Academy and the maining three children at school in the United States.

But Hussein's widow maintained that she is committed to Jordan.

"Jordan will remain my home and my base," she said.

Young man slaughtered in Sirajganj

SIRAJGANJ, June 25: Unidentified assailants slaughtered a young man in Sirajganj village in Tarash thana today, reports UNB.

Police said the miscreants entered the bedroom of Shafiqul Islam, 25, son of Abdus Salam, at about 3 am and slaughtered him.

The motive behind the killing could not be known immediately. Police took the body to the hospital for autopsies.

A case was filed with Sadar thana police in this connection.