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JS to discuss transshipment today

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad will discuss the controversial transshipment issue amid opposition boycott today.

The current session of parliament resumes at 9.30 this morning after a six-day recess for the Asian Parliamentary Conference for Peace and Cooperation which concluded in the city Saturday.

Opposition BNP and its allies are boycotting the session that began on August 29, protesting the government's decision to examine the proposal to allow land transshipment facility to India.

The opposition parties found it "meaningless" to join the parliamentary discussion on the issue, 'already decided' by the government.

But the ruling party said it had only decided to examine the transshipment idea at the experts level.

The AL leaders also alleged that the BNP first agreed to provide India with transit facility and was now opposing transshipment.

See Page 12 Col 8

Army redeployed at Ctg port

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Sept 5: About 200 army personnel have been redeployed at Chittagong port today to strengthen security in the port's protected area, port sources said.

The army have been redeployed here after 17 days of their withdrawal, port sources said. The redeployment took place following appeal from Chittagong Port Authority and Port Users Forum.

The port users appealed to the Prime Minister for redeployment of army in the wake of frequent incidents of pilferage, looting of imported goods and illegal toll collection in port area.

Earlier, army was deployed at Chittagong port on September 17 last year under food cell after the flood, to supervise the discharge of food cargo from the ships.

Kader Siddiqui leads road march

TANGAIL, Sept 5: Bangabir Kader Siddiqui, who resigned from parliament as a ruling party MP recently, today led a road march from Mirzapur to Shakhupur in Tangail with 37 vehicles, campaigning against Prime Minister and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina, reports UNB.

Accompanied by freedom fighters, the renegade Awami League leader addressed 24 roadside meetings, criticising the prime minister for what he called her childish remark about him.

"Hasina is annoyed with me as she understood that I will never surrender to her... Being surrounded by the killers of Bangabandhu she is now undermining many people," he told his supporters.

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Prayer Timings

September 6		
Fajr	Azan	Jamaat
	4:20	4:25
Johr	12:45	1:15
Asr	4:45	5:00
Maghrib	6:25	6:30
Esha	8:00	8:30

Source: Islamic Foundation

The Daily Star

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Militiamen on rampage: UN compound under 'siege'

Tens of thousands flee homes in Dili, massacre feared

DILI, Sept 5: Tens of thousands of people fled their homes in East Timor's capital today, terrified for their lives as pro-Indonesian militias took control of the streets in a rampage of burning and shooting after the landslide vote for independence, reports AP.

Pro-Jakarta forces kept the UN elections team compound under virtual siege, shooting rounds of automatic and semi-automatic gunfire, mostly aimed into the air. Food and water shortages loomed when 1,000 civilians taking refuge in a school next door fled into the compound after guns were shot near them.

Casualty reports were impossible to verify, though witness accounts said scores were

killed Sunday in the former Portuguese colony.

"There is every indication that a massacre is taking place, staged by (Indonesian) military forces," Ana Gomes, who is Lisbon's diplomatic envoy to Jakarta, told Portugal's TSF radio. "Over 100 dead would be a conservative estimate."

People escaped however they could in an exodus from the province. More than 5,000 terrified civilians fled from Dili's seaport on ferries for nearby islands, which are being prepared to receive as many as 100,000 people.

In Dili, the provincial capital, rampaging militiamen with guns and machetes spread terror. There was no apparent attempt by thousands of soldiers

and police to stop them, underscoring allegations that elements in the security forces are tacitly supporting the renegades.

The militias outside the UN compound on the outskirts of the city kept the hundreds of UN workers penned in all day.

The militias also kept up gunfire outside one hotel housing foreigners still in Dili, a religious centre filled with refugees and an election observers' office run by former US President Jimmy Carter's pro-democracy foundation, according to witnesses on the scene.

Some 2,000 people huddled at the Dili residence of Bishop Carlos Belo, East Timor's spiritual leader and co-winner of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize. The

bishop was safe inside the house, but his diocese office across town was set ablaze.

"This is the time that we badly need some peacekeeping troops in this region to protect ordinary people who have no weapons, such as children, women and the elderly," Belo told reporters.

Exasperated police said 15,000 people had crowded into the police compound to stay out of harm's way.

At the airport, civilians clutching their dearest possessions dashed across the runway, scrambling aboard an air force cargo plane to fly to safety through skies filled with smoke from burning buildings.

More than 100 journalists, See Page 12 Col 6

'Interim' probe report submitted BB withdraws notice on UCBL board

Star Report

The Bangladesh Bank yesterday withdrew the show-cause notice it served on the UCBL board on August 27, the day after vandals stormed its boardroom.

The same central bank order also suspended activities of the board and appointed an administrator to perform the functions of the board.

In a letter to UCBL chairman Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury, the central bank said that it was withdrawing the notice in the public interest "as normalcy is returning in the bank".

The latest central bank letter also means Zafar Chowdhury is formally recognised as the chairman of the bank. On August 27, the Bangladesh Bank gave notices to Zafar Chowdhury and Babu, both addressed as chairman.

Meanwhile, the BB inquiry committee in an interim report has called the August 26 incident 'sudden, unnatural and unprecedented' in the presence of police.

The brief report said that "some unruly outsiders barged into the boardroom, terrorised the board members" and forced five directors to resign.

The report said the violence was a result of internal conflict of the bank sponsors, which hampered the security of UCBL.

The directors said immediately after the incident they had been forced to resign, the interim report pointed out.

The incident shook the public confidence in general and caused anxiety among the depositors, the report said. "In or See Page 12 Col 3

Babu, Zafar, six others granted anticipatory bail

By Staff Correspondent

A High Court bench yesterday temporarily granted an anticipatory bail to Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury Babu, his son Saifuzzaman Chowdhury Zaved, Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury and five others in connection with the August 26 UCBL incident.

The bench comprising Justice Mahfuzur Rahman and Justice Mohammad Ali Asgar Khan granted the bail "till disposal of the rule or submission of police report, whichever is earlier".

The court also issued a rule upon the government to explain why the accused petitioners should not be granted permanent bail.

Earlier, the court also granted anticipatory bail, temporarily, to Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury, Jahangir Alam, Shaikat Aziz Russel, Riyad Zafar Chowdhury and Monowara Begum.

Meanwhile, the CMM yesterday ordered the Motilal police to accept an FIR of UCBL. The CMM order came after the bank filed a case complaining that the police were not "treating" their FIR.

Zafar fears fresh attack, demands Babu's prosecution

By Staff Correspondent

UCBL chairman Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday demanded prosecution of Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury Babu for his alleged involvement in vandalism in the bank's boardroom on August 26.

"We want legal action against Babu immediately. We are worried about another attack as the government is yet to take any action against him," he said at a hurriedly-called press conference at a city hotel yesterday afternoon.

He warned that he would postpone a scheduled board meeting today if police did not ensure security.

Zafar Chowdhury welcomed the Bangladesh Bank order withdrawing the show cause issued to the board of directors on August 27. "We are happy about it though it is late."

The UCBL chairman said Babu had spoken to the bank's managing director Saturday over phone, claiming himself as the chairman of the bank.

He said that the board was also determined to hold its pre-scheduled annual general meeting (AGM) on September 15.

Zafar said that he and fellow directors met the prime minister last Friday. "She assured us that legal action would follow after necessary investigation."

UCBL directors who attended the press conference included Reza Zafar Chowdhury, Shaikat Ali Russell, Yunus Ahmed, M A Sabur and Z A Khan.

Babu says he is still the chairman

By Staff Correspondent

Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury Babu, ex-chairman of United Commercial Bank Ltd (UCBL), is continuing to claim that he is the legally elected chairman of the bank.

"None in its order has the High Court said that Zafar Chowdhury is the chairman of the bank. The HC only stayed the central bank order," Babu told a press conference yesterday.

He said the matter is under trial at a lower court which has already issued a show-cause notice on Zafar Chowdhury and others.

Replying to questions, Babu said that he would talk to the central bank governor before deciding whether or not to join a board meeting scheduled for today.

About yesterday's central bank's letter to Zafar Chowdhury addressing him as the chairman of the bank, Babu said that the governor did not tell him any such thing and that the central bank withdrawal of the notice was a result of an out-of-court settlement between the Bangladesh Bank and the petitioners.

Babu also said that he was feeling insecure and that there were threats on his life. See Page 12 Col 1

JCD-BCL clash in Netrokona: 20 injured

From Our Correspondent

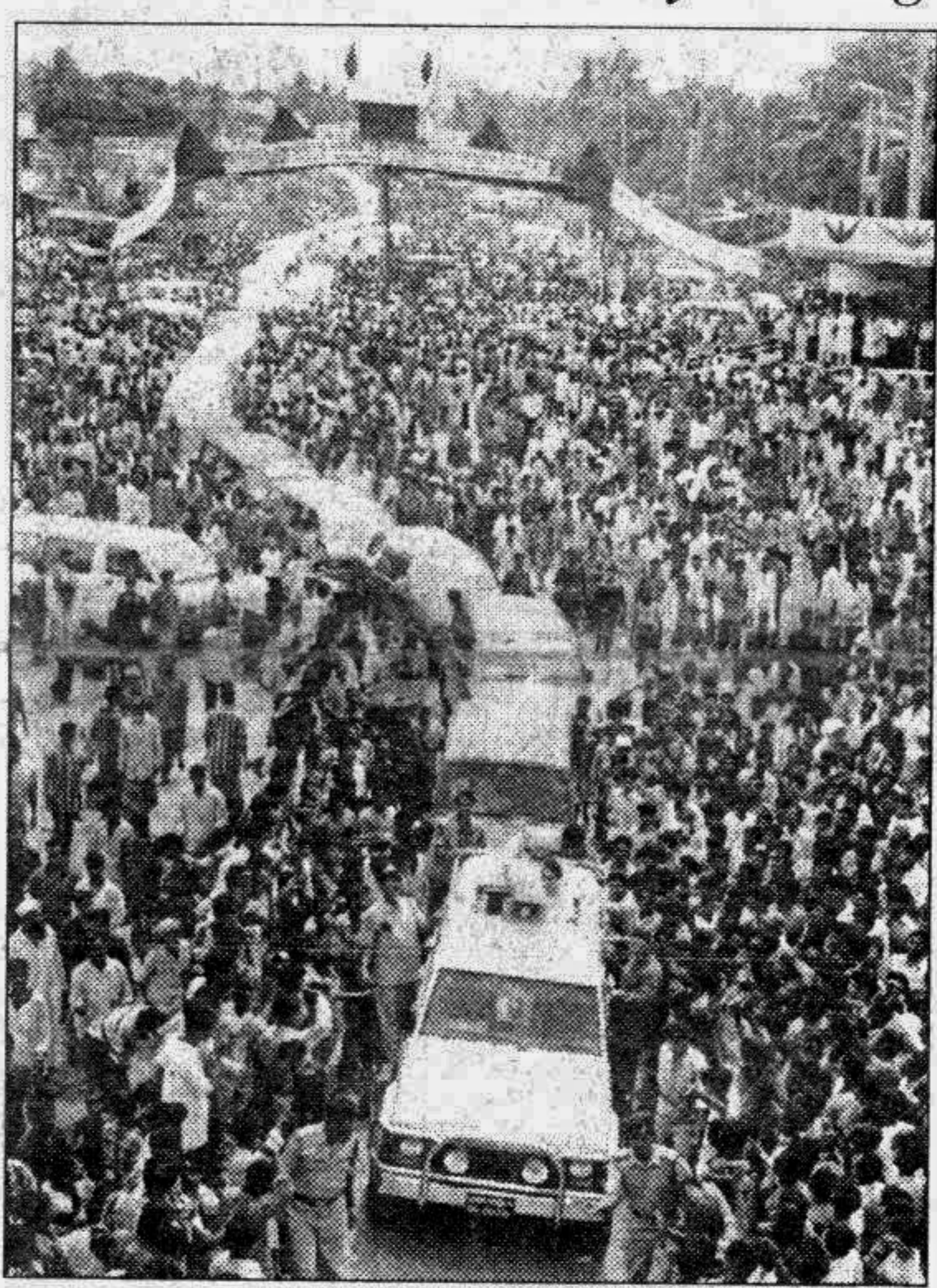
NETROKONA, Sept 5: At least 20 people were injured, three with bullet, in a gunfight between JCD and BCL at Mohonganj thana headquarters in the district this morning.

The bullet hit three JCD activists, identified as Titu, Habib and Doha were rushed to Myemensingh Medical College Hospital. Their condition was stated to be critical.

Police and witnesses said, the clash followed an altercation between two BCL activists and a group of transport workers over bus fare at Mohonganj. See Page 12 Col 6

After corridor, AL govt will give port, gas to India

Khaleda tells rally during road march



BNP's road march towards Aricha passing through Savar yesterday. — Star photo

By Staff Correspondent

BNP chief Khaleda Zia yesterday said the country is gradually moving towards a "mass upsurge" and fall of this "subservient government" is inevitable.

"This government will fall or they will escape to India if a slight push is given," she said while addressing a series of wayside public meeting during the Dhaka-Aricha road march organised by her party.

The road march was the fourth of its kind led by Begum Zia to mobilise public opinion against the "government decision to provide corridor to India in the name of transshipment" and to protest its "misrule".

Seeing massive public support to BNP's movement against giving "corridor" to India, the government has mounted repression on the opposition, she alleged.

"But BNP is not alone as people are united under it and have joined the current movement to protect the independence and sovereignty of the country," she said.

"Our movement is not to go in power... This movement is purely to protect the country."

She started the road march from Amin Bazar at 11:40am with a convoy of some 300 cars after addressing a huge gathering there. Thousands of people attended the meeting and chanted various anti-government slogans opposing the move to provide transit to India.

See Page 11 Col 7

Arafat, Barak sign accord

SHARM EL-SHEIKH (Egypt), Sept 5: Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak signed a deal in Egypt on Saturday that puts stalled Middle East peace-making back on track after weeks of tortuous negotiations, reports Reuters.

US President Bill Clinton said he hoped the new accord, dubbed Wye Two, could be a stepping stone to a broader Middle East peace and pledged US support.

Barak and Arafat smiled broadly and shook hands as US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Jordan's King Abdullah watched the ceremony at a luxury hotel in Egypt's Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh.

The agreement revises the Wye River accord signed last October by Arafat and Israel's former rightwing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who froze its implementation in December.

The new agreement sets the terms for three Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank between September and January.

It offers the Palestinians more prisoner releases, clearance to open Gaza seaport and a safe passage from Gaza to the West Bank.

Israel and the Palestinians will also aim to complete by February 15 a "framework agreement" on some of the most difficult disputes in the Arab-Israeli conflict — Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, the future of Jewish settlement, and the borders and status of the Palestinian territories.

Meanwhile Israel's cabinet today was convening to ratify the accord.

[Earlier story on page 9]

Hasina urges Khaleda Join JS, raise objection to transshipment, if any

PUTHIA (Rajshahi), Sept 5: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has urged the Opposition leader Khaleda Zia to join parliament to discuss the transshipment issue discarding street protests, reports UNB.

"If you (Khaleda Zia) have a say about the proposed transshipment, then come to Parliament and join discussion on it, instead of creating sufferings to the people in the name of movement," she said.

Parliament tomorrow takes up for discussion a cabinet decision regarding transshipment of Indian commodities through Bangladesh. The opposition is boycotting the parliament session.

Addressing a huge public meeting at PN Pilot High

Saifur blasts Lockwood again

Former Finance Minister Saifur Rahman yesterday blasted UNDP Country Representative David Lockwood for defending his remarks about the BNP and other opposition MPs who abstained from attending the just concluded Asian Parliamentarians' peace conference in the city, reports UNB.

Saifur in a statement said, it was expected that David Lockwood would regret to the people for his controversial comments about the opposition.

At the inaugural session of the conference on September 1, Lockwood said that the opposition's absence hurts the nation, See Page 11 Col 8

School ground here today, the prime minister blasted the opposition for kicking up a dust on transit which, she said, BNP had given to India.

"We do not find any reason for causing sufferings to the people, creating anarchy in the name of movement."

She said the government of General Zia had given transit to India by signing agreement in 1980 after which the accord had been renewed every three years, last in 1995 during Khaleda Zia's rule.

Under the agreement signed by the Zia government, Indian goods are being carried through the country using water routes, she told the function, adding that transit is in operation here.

And now, she said, the government is thinking of giving transshipment facility under which Indian goods will be carried by Bangladesh transport.

"If she has got any objection to it, she can raise the issue in parliament instead of staging street movement."

For elimination of terrorism from society, Hasina sought cooperation of the opposition parties. She urged them not to provide shelter to terrorists.

If the opposition parties give protection to the terrorists, the government will not be able to remove terrorism from society, she said.

The prime minister said the terrorists have surrendered arms in the southwest region and were returning to normal life. "But total elimination," See Page 11 Col 7

Indian polls: Stray violence kills five, 55pc turnout

From Pallab Bhattacharya

NEW DELHI, Sept 5: Moderate to heavy turnout of voters marked the first phase of the Indian general election — the second in just over a year — as stray violence and police firing left five people dead during balloting.

An estimated 55 per cent of the over 15 crore voters exercised their franchise in the first phase which saw polling for 145 Lok Sabha constituencies across 16 states and federally-ruled territories.

Lok Sabha has a total strength of 542 members. The second phase of polling is scheduled for September 11 and the fifth and final phase for October 3.

An estimated 70 per cent of the electorate cast their votes in

Bellary, a predominantly rural constituency in the southern State of Karnataka, where the electoral fate of top Opposition leader Sonia Gandhi and her BJP rival Sushma Swaraj were decided.

Women voters outnumbered in polling booths in Bellary where polling was peaceful, according to reports reaching here said.

Three persons were killed when police opened fire to disperse violent activists of ruling Telegu Desam Party and main opposition Congress in Cudappah District of Andhra Pradesh.

A polling agent of TDP was killed when crude bomb was hurled on him allegedly by the Congress supporters. Another

polling agent was killed in Punjab.

Police used teargas shells and charged with batons in Srinagar parliamentary constituency of Jammu and Kashmir where Omar Abdullah, son of Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah, faces Mehbooba Mufti, daughter of former Congress leader Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, in Srinagar constituency.

A moderate voter turnout of 47 per cent of 87 lakh was recorded in the elections to seven constituencies in the capital Delhi, which passed off peacefully barring minor skirmishes.

The capital had recorded about 52 per cent voter turnout in the 1998 Lok Sabha polls. See Page 11 Col 7

Farooq Sobhan pledges C'wealth will be made more effective

By Staff Correspondent

Farooq Sobhan, Bangladesh candidate for the post of Commonwealth Secretary General, intends to add 'new dimensions' and give a 'more visible profile' to the 54-nation organisation if he is elected.

Talking to a group of newsmen at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday, the veteran diplomat who had several stints as the country's envoy and also served as foreign secretary, said: "We need to give a participatory sense to the developing nations of the Commonwealth who constitute the bulk of the members."

The developing countries form the bulwark of the new Commonwealth. Fifty of the 54 Commonwealth members are developing countries and it is the development agenda that

needs to get priority and higher focus to take the Commonwealth into the new millennium.

"The spirit and work of the Commonwealth are not and should not be centred around the government only but should also centre around the civil society in the member countries."

"I also share the vision of most developing countries to activate the unofficial Commonwealth comprising innumerable non-government organisations and increase the working partnership with the government. The Commonwealth Secretariat is already involved in a lot of activities and I intend to increase them further."

Farooq Sobhan is having a See Page 11 Col 8

Dhaka willing to offer port facility to Nepal

Bangladesh is willing to offer its seaports for more economic cooperation with Nepal, reports UNB.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad said this at a meeting with his Nepalese counterpart Dr Ram Sharan Mahat, now visiting Dhaka, at the state guest house Meghna yesterday evening.

Dr Ram Sharan Mahat said Nepal is eager to strengthen economic cooperations with Bangladesh.

The two foreign ministers had talks on forthcoming SAARC Summit to be held in Katmandu later this year.

They also exchanged views on regional and international issues, said a spokesman of Bangladesh Foreign Ministry.

Foreign Secretary CM Shaif Sami and Nepalese Ambassador in Dhaka Madhu Raman Acharya were present.

Ministry toying with idea of curbing Petrobangla's power

By Sharier Khan

Production Sharing Contracts

The Energy Ministry is toying with the idea of curtailing Petrobangla's powers as regards management of Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs), particularly approval of oil companies' budgets, sources concerned said.

The ministry believes that the power to approve budgets of more than Tk 10 crore should either be vested with it or with the Purchase Committee of the Cabinet.

Although the idea clashes with PSC outlines and the government's policy regarding private sector involvement in gas sector, the energy ministry is thinking of it for months now.

It argues that the Joint Review Committee (JRC) and Joint Management Committee (JMC) comprising Petrobangla offi-

with direct purchase. Rather these deal with costs relating to exploration and development of gasfield, which are later recovered from gas production," an official said.

"PSC-related budget approval requires technical skill in the fields concerned. Besides, the very nature of investments under PSCs require comparatively faster approval by the authorities," said another official.

"Above all, PSCs give Petrobangla the authority it is now exercising in this regard. If we have to change this authority, we have to modify the PSCs. In that case, we have to make the oil companies agree to it."

One source pointed out that the energy ministry has been trying to reduce Petrobangla's See Page 12 Col 3



Congress candidate Sonia Gandhi casting vote at a polling station in New Delhi (left). Her rival Sushma Swaraj of BJP watching casting of vote in Bellary constituency yesterday. — AFP photo