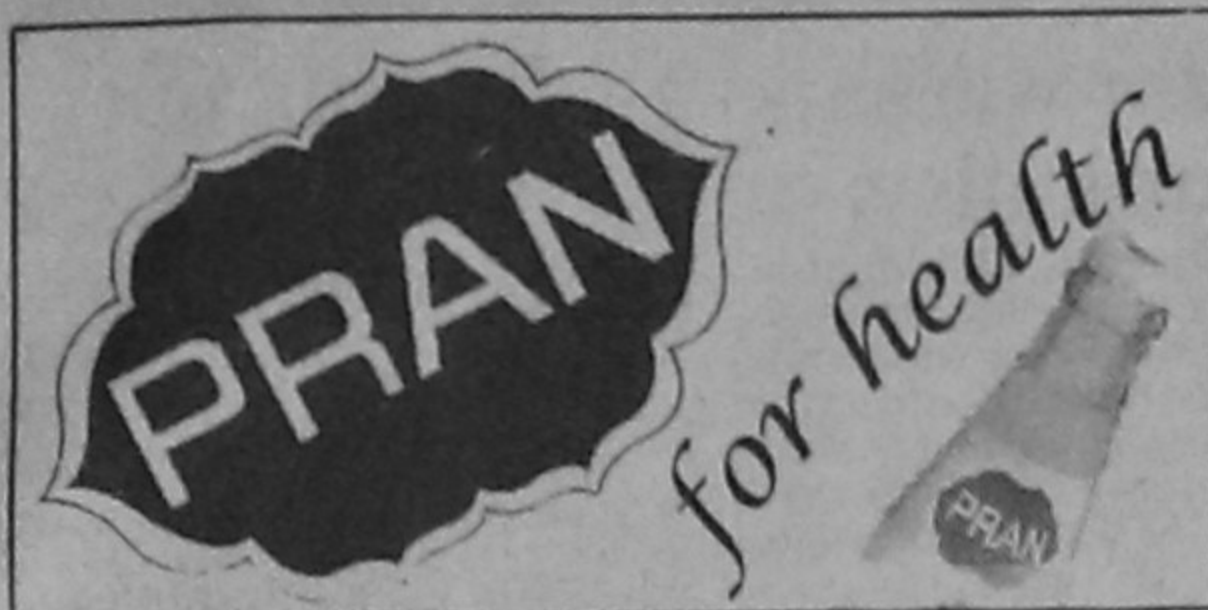


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Cyclone weakens

By Special Correspondent

The cyclone that was brewing in the Bay of Bengal for the past couple of days and eyeing the south-eastern tip of Bangladesh at Cox's Bazar disintegrated midnight on Friday, meteorological department said yesterday.

"It could have been a mean one as it set its course towards the south-eastern coast. But it split into two and rained itself out," a senior meteorologist said about the cyclone that petered into a low by yesterday afternoon.

But the low temperature in the bay was not favourable, depriving it of gaining the necessary heat to garner strength for the take-off, the meteorologist said.

After splitting, one half of the storm moved towards northeast, triggering heavy rain on the bay and the other section rolled towards south-west, also causing heavy rains.

But the remains of the cyclone may move on-shore and cause rain in the country in the next couple of days, soothing the early summer's heat, the meteorologist said.

The cyclone had triggered alarms along the coast with authorities asking for raising of danger signal number 3 in the maritime ports.

Fishing boats have been asked to remain hugging the coast till this morning to avoid the still rough waters in the bay and high winds.

Steps being taken to salvage MV Revenge

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Mar 31: A detained foreign vessel remains anchored at the outer anchorage of Chittagong port in a risky position as sea water is entering its engine room due to a leakage, port sources said.

MV Revenge, Romanian flag carrying vessel, was detained following an admiralty suit after it arrived at the port in August last year.

The port authorities today sent a tug to remain stand-by for salvaging the vessel in case of sinking, and took steps to keep watch on it round the clock, the sources said.

A senior port official, however, claimed that the ship was out of danger as pumping of water from the engine room continued as usual. "In spite of that, our tug is ready to tow it for emergency beaching in case of any danger," he said.

A small number of crew are staying on board the vessel. The port authorities sent a message asking the owner of the ship to sort out the problem. But the owner is yet to respond.

Our new numbers

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Prayer Timings

April 1

Fajr 5:00, Zuhr 1:00, Asr 4:45, Maghrib 6:20, Esha 8:00

Source: Islamic Foundation

Faster reform linked with aid pledge

Temple's letter to Kibria

By Staff Correspondent

Donors have indicated that the level of assistance for next fiscal year could range between US dollars 1.8 and 2.2 billion but warned that accelerated reforms would be key to getting even the lower figure.

"This (assistance) could be significantly higher if the pace of reforms were to accelerate," Country Director of the World Bank Frederick T Temple wrote to the finance minister on behalf of the donor community.

"At the LCG meeting, the development partners emphasised that the realisation of even the lower figure will depend crucially on accelerated progress in policy and institutional reform and faster utilisation of the existing aid pipeline."

The WB mission chief wrote the letter Monday in response to Finance Minister SAMS Kibria's plea for an aid pledge to help make budgetary planning.

This is the first time that the donors made such an early indication of development assistance before the Paris meeting between the development partners and the government.

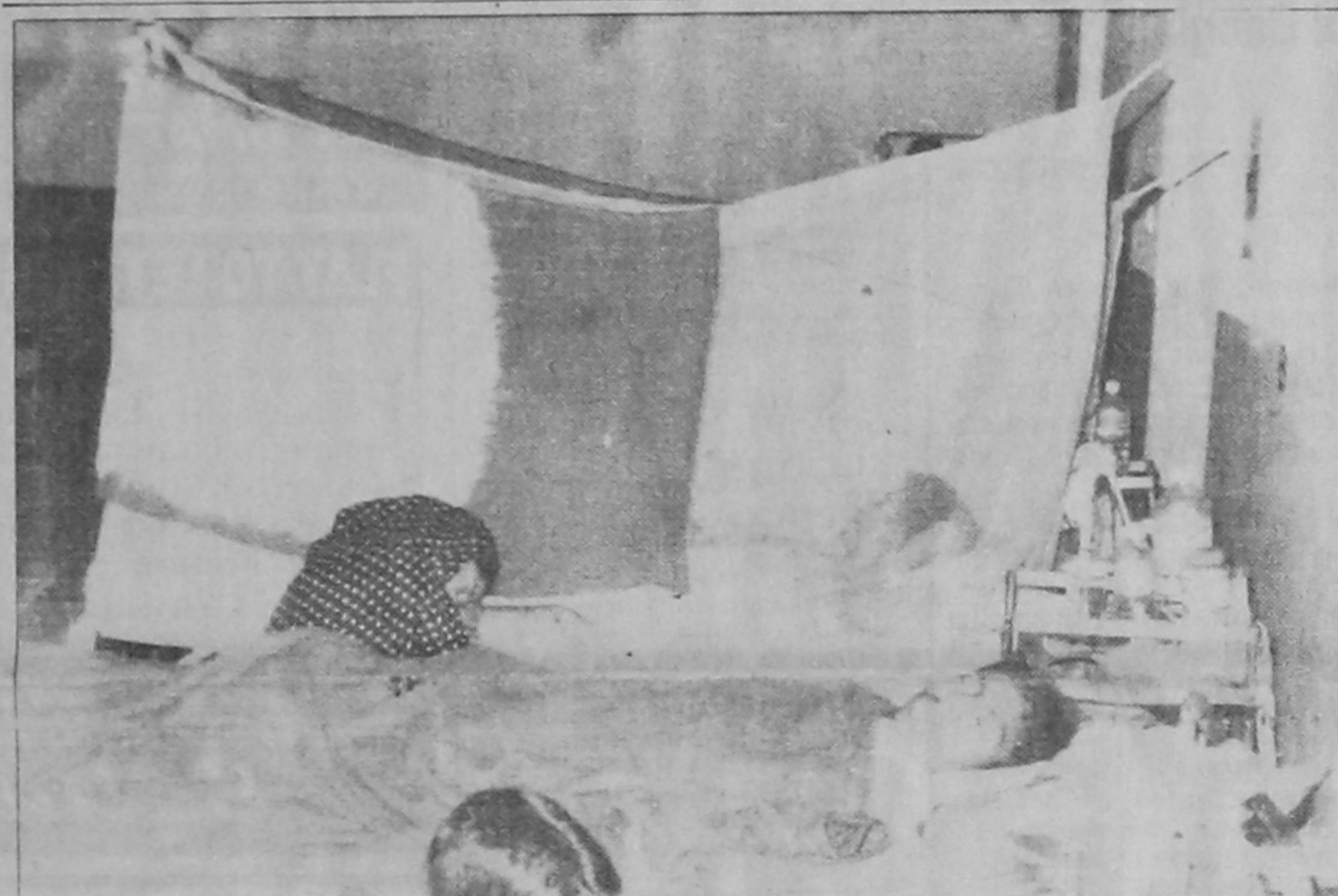
The indicative aid amount was derived through a consultation process between the Economic Relations Division (ERD) and the donors on the current commitment and planned development programmes.

Expressing his reaction on the letter, Kibria said, "This is a positive gesture from the donors. I am satisfied with their indication. If we can speed up reforms, the aid flow would be two billion dollars. But utilisation of pipeline aid is important in this regard."

The opening aid pipeline for this fiscal year was 5979.5 million dollars and another 1028 million dollars have been added to this till March. At the same time, 765.4 million dollars were disbursed during July-December of this fiscal year, which was 122 million dollars higher than that in the corresponding period of last year.

Responding to the government's logic for aid pledge to help budgetary planning, the WB chief's letter said, "A review of experience with development assistance in Bangladesh since the mid-1980s indicates that aid indications in Paris are in fact not very useful for budgetary planning. The review shows that during FY 91-99, aid indications have not corresponded closely with actual commitments during the following fiscal year. Except following natural disasters, actual commitments have been below the indications in Paris. The shortfalls have generally resulted from the pace of reforms being slower than expected. In addition, the figures historically given in Paris have been a mixture of new commitments and disbursements from past commitments and have included development assistance that does not pass through the

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There is no respite from mosquitoes even at daytime for the patient who sleeps under a curtain at Ward-32 at Dhaka Medical College Hospital while the attendant rests her head on the bed.

Delayed bid to fight mosquito menace

By DU Correspondent

A Tk 9.62 crore Integrated Mosquito Management Project will be launched shortly to reduce mosquito menace in the city.

The project will be implemented by the Zoological Society of Bangladesh (ZSB) in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment, ZSB sources said.

The project was approved by the Planning Ministry but implementation of it was delayed due to fund crisis and also because Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) submitted a similar project to the ministry, the sources said.

DCC first submitted a Tk 101 crore project and later revised it to Tk 63 crore. The ministry is yet to approve the project.

About the DCC project, ZSB president Prof Mahmudul Amin said that DCC has machinery and manpower to implement it but it does not have any research component.

He said ZSB has already conducted research on increasing mosquito menace in different areas of the capital. If the project is implemented, the

menace would be reduced greatly.

Prof Amin however said the Planning Commission has suggested combining the two projects so that it could be implemented much more effectively.

ZSB took up the project late last year following increase of some dangerous types of mosquitoes in the capital to assist the DCC to combat this problem.

The number of mosquitoes carrying virus of dangerous diseases like Dengue fever has increased two to three times in the recent days, said an expert.

"Our goal will be to get rid of mosquitoes using minimum insecticide," said Prof Amin. About the causes of increase in the number of mosquitoes carrying Dengue fever virus in the city, he said it is due to 'stagnation of dirty water for more than a week at a certain place'.

"We can call it household mosquitoes as most of these breed at the houses where dirty water or other things are clogged," he said, adding that most of the mosquitoes that

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French NA votes for equality of women in politics

PARIS, Mar 31: France's National Assembly last Thursday

voted overwhelmingly to give men and women equal access to political office, in what the minister for women said was a historic move, reports AFP.

Under the bill, passed on second reading, there must be equal numbers of women and men candidates for elections and lists of candidates must alternate between women and men.

Nicole Pery, secretary of state for women's rights, said: "This is an important stage in the fight for equality which will... deeply transform our political life. I am convinced that this text will go down in the history of women and their march toward equality."

The lower house of parliament overturned some changes that had been introduced by the Senate, where the bill will return for a final reading.

The only vote against came from maverick right-wing MP Philippe de Villiers of the Rally for France party, who declared: "Quotas are demeaning for those whom they are meant to support. This division of humanity into two sexes will turn against women."

Mayor Elahi, a JCD leader, the election should be held every year at a scheduled time. Considering the current situation, rival student groups should reach a consensus on the election date, he said.

Pall over DUCSU polls

Disagreements on 'proper atmosphere'

By Abul Kalam Azad

Disagreements between rival student groups over proper atmosphere for polls have made plans to hold the Dhaka University Central Students' Union election uncertain.

Manir Hossain, president of the university's unit of the BNP backed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, said he supported the idea behind the poll, which has not been held since June 6, 1990 due to violent student protests. However, the vote should take place in a healthy academic atmosphere, which was not the case at Dhaka University.

"We want the election to be held every year, since it should be a regular part of the university's academic activities," said Hossain.

M. Sazzad Hossain, president of the university's unit of the Awami League backed Bangladesh Chhatra League,

said the atmosphere on campus was congenial enough to hold the election. The JCD was using the question of atmosphere as an excuse since it was afraid it would lose, he said.

However, Manir dismissed Hossain's allegations. He said the JCD didn't want to go to the polls because the dormitories were occupied by the BCL's activists, forcing JCD supporters to live off campus.

"We cannot carry out organisational activities on the campus peacefully," said Manir. "We are not afraid of the election."

"We are very confident we will win if the poll is held in a neutral and peaceful atmosphere. The JCD won all the posts in the last student's union election."

Prof. Azad Chowdhury, vice-chancellor of the university, said he wanted to hold the elec-

tions to enhance the university's academic sophistication.

"I am not going to hold the election right at the moment though I am satisfied with the existing atmosphere in the campus," said Chowdhury. "The poll should be held regularly, but we should remember the poll could hamper the university's academic atmosphere."

Although the situation on campus has improved recently, university authorities haven't announced a date for the election because they didn't want a repeat of the violent protests and gun battles that marred past attempts.

Mayor Elahi, a JCD leader, the election should be held every year at a scheduled time. Considering the current situation, rival student groups should reach a consensus on the election date, he said.

CU reopens today

From Our Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Mar 31: The Chittagong University will re-open tomorrow after an 'un-scheduled vacation' for 103 days.

The classes remained suspended since the killing of two Shibir activists during a gun battle between BCL and Shibir on December 19 last year.

All Party Student Alliance (APSA) began a strike for indefinite period at the CU on February 1 placing a five-point demand.

All attempts to hold talks with the student organisations to resolve the crisis failed and the Liaison Committee formed in this connection was dissolved and reformed several times.

The CU authority however decided to reopen the university tomorrow with the help of police.

But the APSA is sticking to its demands including arrest of the killers of its activists and removal of VC and Pro-VC of the university.

APSA also threatened to enforce a 72-hour hartal in Chittagong without any notice if any of its activists is arrested under PSA during agitation and demanded immediate release of its 54 activists.

Meanwhile, APSA reportedly threatened the CTM of Railway that it will form a suicidal squad to resist train movement between the city and the university.

No drugs for MDR TB at Chest Disease Hospital

By Staff correspondent

Patients are not getting drugs for treatment of multi drug resistance (MDR) tuberculosis at the Chest Disease Hospital in Mohakhali.

A senior doctor of the hospital confirming this told the Daily Star on Thursday that the hospital never had any supply of certain drugs needed for treatment of MDR tuberculosis also known as second line drug.

"We have plenty of drugs for first line intervention for tuberculosis treatment like for direct observation treatment-short course (DOTS) but those who do not take an eight-month DOTS dose require even stronger doses of drugs."

Thirty-five years old Teresa, mother of two, came to the hospital from Chankharpool about 15 days ago. Doctors told her that she needs anti-TB second line drugs.

"I cannot afford to buy even my meal. How can I buy the drugs that cost so much?" asked Teresa, sitting in her hospital bed.

Like Teresa there are many patients who do not get the medicine. But officials said due to non-availability of the drugs from the central medical stores, drugs could not be supplied.

Truckers UK to pay for human trafficking

LONDON, Mar 31: Lorry drivers arriving in Britain will face tough new fines from Monday in a government crackdown on illegal immigration, reports AFP.

Drivers will be told to pay a penalty of 2,000 pounds (3,200 dollars/euro) for every clandestine immigrant found on board their truck, even if they had secretly stowed away.

Immigration Minister Barbara Roche travelled today to the southeast port of Dover to drive home the message.

The haulage industry has protested over the move, arguing it is impossible for drivers completely to secure their vehicle against stowaways and that the threat of a fine will discourage truckers from cooperating with authorities.

But Roche said: "I have been quite horrified when looking into this matter just to see sometimes how little precaution is taken."

She told BBC radio: "There is a trade in this, there is very big money in it and the government has to take very firm decisive action indeed."

Roche said lorry drivers should do more to secure vehicles before crossing the sea.

South Africa 202 for 7

Star Report

South Africa were 202 for seven in 41 overs, chasing a challenging Pakistan total of 263 for six in 50 overs in Sharjah Cup final last night.

Neil McKenzie hit his maiden half century in one-day international to make 58 off 107 balls and South African captain Hansie Cronje cracked a whirlwind 79 off 71 balls to

See Page 12 Col 1

Pakistan proposes talks, India sees nothing new

ISLAMABAD, Mar 31: Pak-

istan has formally proposed to India that the two countries resume stalled talks on resolving issues plaguing bilateral relations, official Pakistani sources said today, reports AFP.

The proposal was made by Foreign Secretary Inamul Haq during a meeting here Wednesday with the Indian High Commissioner, G. Parthasarathy, they said.

It is the first time Pakistan has officially proposed resumption of dialogue since the military takeover in October, though the military ruler General Pervez Musharraf has repeatedly offered talks.

The principal issue and source of two of the three wars between Pakistan and India since 1947 is their festering row over the Himalayan state of Kashmir, split between the two and claimed by both.

After the May 1998 nuclear tests by Pakistan in reaction to those by India in the same month, Kashmir is widely seen as a potential nuclear flash-point.

India today reiterated that Islamabad must stop "cross-border terrorism" and hostile propaganda before talks can restart.

A spokesman for India's Ministry of External Affairs said the dialogue offer, which came less than a week after US President Bill Clinton's visit to South Asia, was made by Pakistan's foreign secretary to the Indian envoy in Islamabad.

"What was articulated through the media was articulated in person," he said. "It makes no substantive difference. India's position, in substance and nuance, remains unchanged."

Clinton told Musharraf during a brief stopover in Islamabad last weekend to make good on pledges to curb terrorism and defuse tension with India, which has been running high since an undeclared war in the heights of Kashmir last summer.

India says the peace dialogue with Pakistan, which was deflated by that 10-week conflict, See Page 12 Col 8

Khaleda tells Khalishpur rally

PSA created to crush democratic forces

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Mar 31: BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia said today that the Awami League government has failed to live up to the people's expectation in running the country during last four years.

Dubbing the government as "the most corrupt, tyrant and worthless one," the former prime minister said the Awami League government and most Cabinet ministers do not have the quality to steer the country to prosperity.

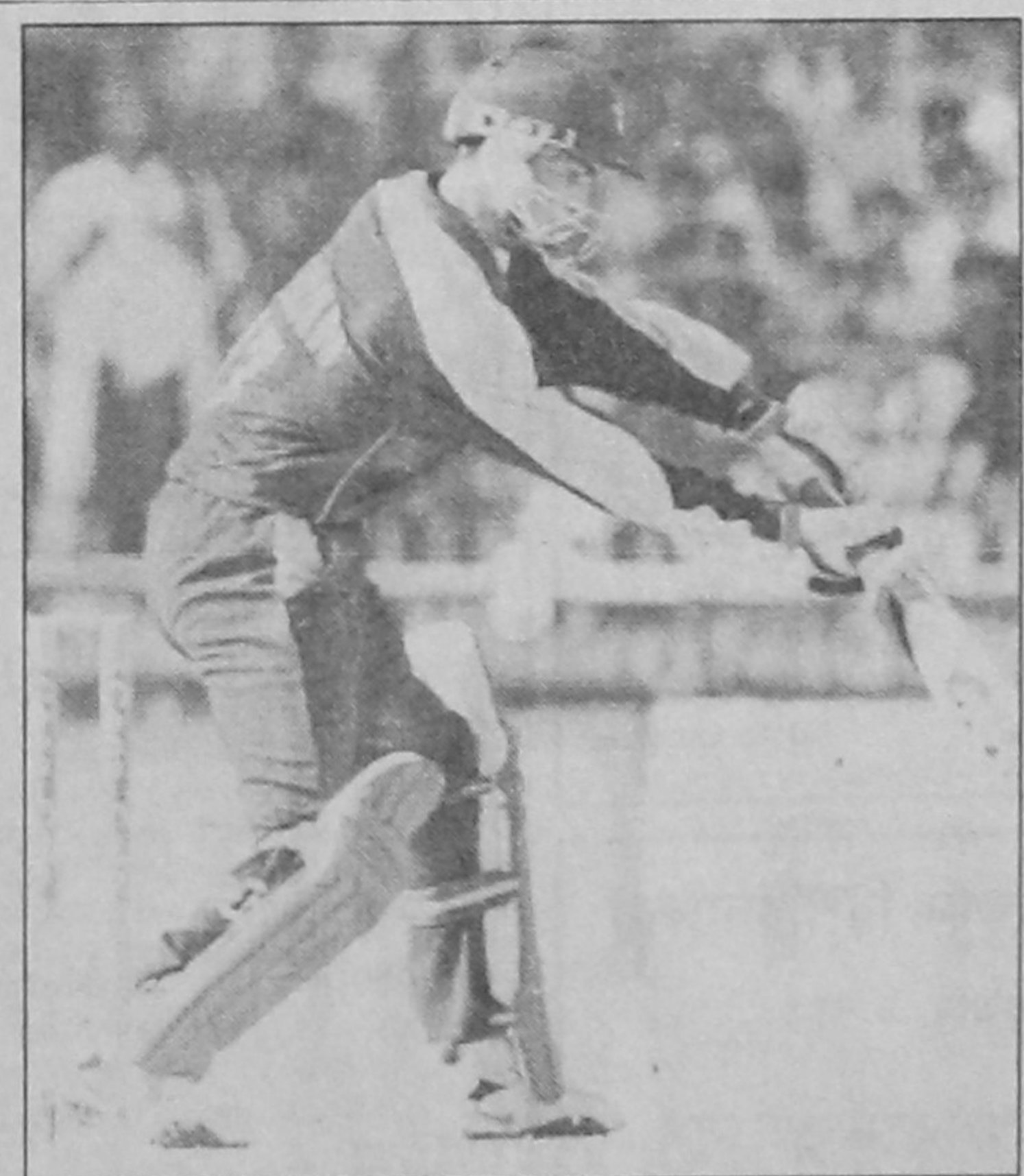
She said the government is only good at selling the interest of the country. "If we are voted again to power, we shall prove our efficiency in running the country for welfare of the people, including farmers in the fields and workers in mills and factories."

Addressing a huge public meeting at Sramik Maidan in Khalishpur this afternoon, the BNP chief said the government is yet to execute Wage Commission of the workers although four years of its rule have gone by.

Khaleda, also the leader of the opposition in parliament, said Sheikh Hasina's government has not stuck to the words it gave to the farmers regarding fair prices of jute and paddy.

She said mills and factories are being closed down one after another, leaving thousands of workers and employees jobless. There is no production in most mills and factories. Borders are now open to all for smuggling and the industries are being crippled one after another.

See Page 12 Col 4



Pakistan opener Imran Nazir plays and misses one outside the off-stump during the Sharjah Cup final against South Africa yesterday (story on Pak innings on Page 13).

— AFP photo

8 drown as trawler capsizes in the Dhanagoda

CHANDPUR, Mar 31: At

least eight people drowned and 12 injured as a trawler capsized after collision with a launch in river Dhanagoda Thursday afternoon, reports UNB.

Police said the Matlab-bound trawler sailing from Munshiganj district sank in the river at Beltani in Matlab thana at around 1 pm being rammed by a launch, PV Anzard.

Six of the dead were identified as Mafiz Begum, 28, of Munshiganj and Maksud, 40, Rabeya Bashri, 25, Ayesha Akhtar, 70, Nargis Akhtar, 11, and Rehana Akhtar, 11, of Dhaka. Relatives took away two other bodies.

Sources said eight of some 90 passengers of the overloaded mechanised boat died in the accident while 12 others sustained injuries. The injured were admitted to a health centre at Sadullahpur.

The passengers were going to join urs mahfil at 'Lenglar Mazar' in Matlab thana when the accident occurred. Police seized the launch but could not arrest anyone responsible for the mishap as the vehicle was empty.

Acting Deputy Commissioner M Sirajul Islam, TNO and police officials visited the spot this morning.



A shell-shocked sister of Habibur Rahman Zahid, is beyond console after hearing the news of her brother's death yesterday.

— Star photo

Polytech student murdered

By Staff Correspondent

Unidentified people murdered a polytechnic student in the city's Tejgaon in the early hours of yesterday.

The dead, Habibur Rahman Zahid, 23, was a third year student of Tejgaon Polytechnic Institute and an activist of ruling party's student front, Bangladesh Chhatra League.

A family feud might have been behind the killing of Zahid, police said without elaborating further.

According to hospital sources, Zahid was found in a critical condition on Post Office Lane at about 1 a.m. He was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he died soon after.

The body of the victim was sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

Maulana Delwar Hossain, elder brother of the victim, filed a case with Tejgaon police.

Police arrested one Jahangir on suspicion.

UNB adds: Some students of the Institute stormed into his room at Latif Hall at midnight and dragged him out.

The terrorists beat him indiscriminately, breaking his hands and legs inside the college compound," a campus source said.

"Some inmates of the hall woke up hearing the wails of helplessness. Zahid had no one to rely on him," the source said quoting witnesses.

A case was filed with Tejgaon Thana accusing 14, including Sumon, Mamun, Moktar, Shaon, Gittu Monir, Jahangir, Rafiq, Lomba Zahid and Titu. All are students of the Institute.

A contingent of police has been deployed on the campus to avert any possible backlash.

BCL leader handed over to police for misbehaving with minister, released

By DU Correspondent

A central leader of the ruling party's student front BCL was handed over to police yesterday for misbehaving with a minister, sources concerned said.

Organising Secretary of BCL Ashraful Azim Ruben was taken to Gulshan thana and released after two hours when other BCL leaders went to the thana.

Ruben went to the residence of Education Minister AHK Sadek and requested him to include a school in his (Ruben) village in a project of the ministry. The minister asked Ruben to come to his office. At this the BCL leader misbehaved with him and forced him to sign a paper. The minister then handed him over to police, the sources said.

When contacted, Gulshan police however said that no student leader was picked up from the education minister's residence.

Rocket launchers, bombs seized at Mongla

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Mar 31: Police recovered six powerful hand bombs and 31 rocket launchers from a colony at Mongla in the early morning of Thursday.

A young man, identified as Faruque, was taken to police custody for questioning.

It was learnt from Mongla thana police that the rocket launchers were recently unloaded from a foreign sea-going vessel.

BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia is scheduled to address a public meeting at Mongla helipad maidan tomorrow. Police said they were investigating whether the bombs had any link to her visit.