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## Expel bank loan defaulters from parties: Shahabuddin

President Shahabuddin Ahmed urged political parties yesterday to reach a consensus on some contentious national issues, reports UNB.

He pointed to some specific issues that he said need urgent attention to help society run its normal course. Among the problems are on-again-off-again student violence, cheating on exams, loan default, politics of vengeance and population boom.

The president made the call at a function commemorating historic Mujibnagar Day, the anniversary of formation of the first government of Bangladesh during the 1971 Liberation War.

Shahabuddin came down heavily on the bank loan defaulters and called for the politicians to reach a consensus and expel them from their respective parties.

"The bank loan defaulters are destroying the financial system of the country," the president said.

Differences in thinking and opinion in a democratic society are normal, but all will have to play their roles in the interest of national prosperity and democracy.

"Accusing and abusing each other cannot bring solution to

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## SC Bar refuses to accept audit report

By Staff Correspondent

The Supreme Court Bar Association has refused to accept the annual audit report for 1999-2000 on suspicion of gross financial irregularities.

The internal audit sub-committee appointed during the annual general meeting of the association held on April 12 resumed work yesterday, sources said.

The association's audit report was not accepted by the House and was sent for scrutiny by a sub-committee appointed during the annual general meeting.

Complaints are also pouring in about widespread corruption by officials during the term.

The sub-committee directed the office of the SC Bar Association to circulate a notice to its members, clerks of the advocates, typists, shop keepers, contractors and chartered accountant audit firm to ask for relevant information about budget expenses for 1999-2000.

M Nawab Ali, Kazi Shahabuddin Ahmed, HK Abdul Hye, Motiur Rahman and Khan Saifur Rahman are scheduled to submit their report within the next two weeks. Hye was appointed member secretary of the sub-committee.

## Our new numbers

19 Karwan Bazar, Dhaka-1215  
Phones: 8124944, 8124955 & 8124966  
Fax: 8125155

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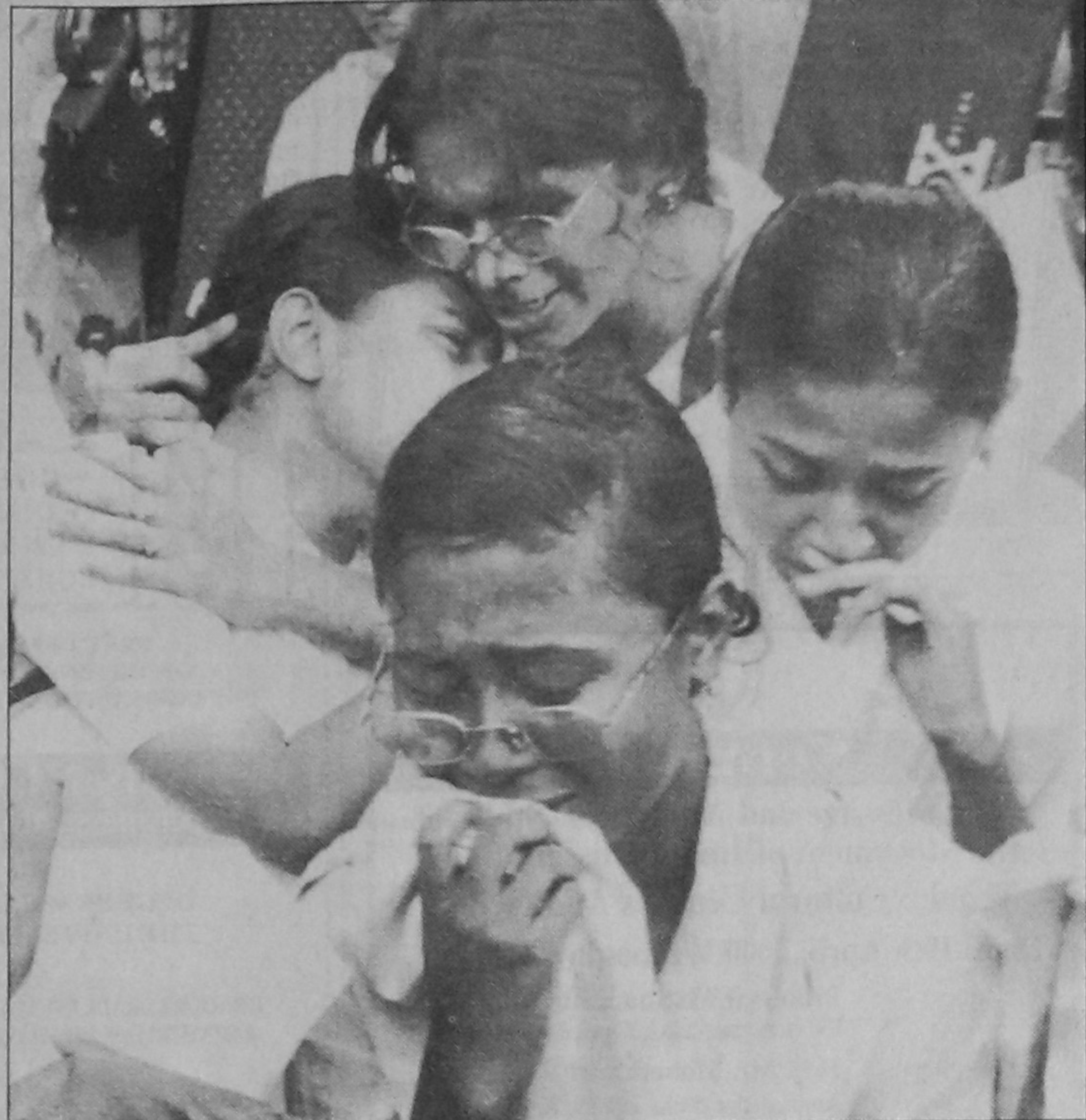
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April	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
18		6:21 pm
19	5:34am	

## Prayer Timings

April 18		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-45	5-15
Johr	12-45	1-20
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-25	6-30
Eshia	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation



Some of the Motijheel Model College students burst into tears during the sit-in on the campus yesterday. — Star photo

## 132 examinees now to go on hunger strike

The HSC candidates from Motijheel Model High School & College who have been denied permission to take the examination will begin a hunger strike Thursday if their demand is not met, reports UNB.

The students, who staged a sit-in on the college premises yesterday said they begin the hunger strike if their demand is not met within 48 hours and the government fails to make a decision.

After the sit-in, the students marched towards the Dhaka Education Board office. Police intercepted the procession in front of the National Press Club.

A five-member delegation of guardians went to meet the Education Secretary, but a deputy secretary of the ministry met them at the gate of Secretariat. He assured them that there would be an official decision within few days, said Jafar Ahmed Bhuiyan, a guardian.

Meanwhile, the Samajtantrik Chhatra Front demanded the government allow the students to sit for the HSC examinations, which begin April 27.

Some 132 HSC students of Motijheel Model High School & College have been denied the chance to take the examinations.

## Conspiracy against politics

Kibria reacts to demands for audit and law to manage contribution to parties

Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria said the creation of a law to control political contributions by consensus would be positive for the nation, but warned people against unmerited vilification of politicians, reports UNB.

"The issue of political contributions should be discussed in parliament. A law could be created with the consensus of all the parties."

"It will be a positive step for the welfare of society and the nation, since all parties depend on political contributions," said Kibria.

Corruption was one of the main topics of discussion at the April 13-14 meeting in Paris, where donors reviewed the country's latest socioeconomic scenario, development needs and priorities for the next fiscal year.

Kibria said he supported auditing the assets of the political leaders.

"Not only the politicians... transparency should be established in every profession. There are lot of professions who never give the account of their assets and wealth. Even if they are asked for it, they feel disturbed and avoid."

"Establishing transparency and accountability should be everybody's goal. I don't have a disagreement on the issue of auditing the assets and wealth

of politicians."

Kibria said there should be a sustainable, concerted effort to eliminate corruption from the economy, politics and society.

However, the finance minister said demands for audits and a law to manage political contributions was a conspiracy against politics.

"Campaigning against a particular section of society must have an ill motive. Those who want to destroy the democratic process in the country are involved in such propaganda,"



Kibria making a point at the press conference

said Kibria.

Kibria said he understood that an evil force was campaigning against politics and politicians.

FBCCI President Abdul Mintoo demanded at a discussion Sunday the creation of a law to control political fundraising.

Kibria said he opposed the idea that Bangladesh should refuse assistance from donors, since the country needs it to continue its development agenda and eradicate poverty.

"I completely disagree with those who oppose international assistance, since it is required to supplement our savings and investments," said Kibria.

Kibria said the development partners made it clear that any solution to the political situation in Bangladesh should occur within a constitutional framework, that is, dialogue in parliament.

The finance minister said reports printed in some of the newspapers about protests against him were blatant lies.

"None gheraoed me. They submitted a memorandum that our Ambassador gave me. I don't think the donors took any notice of it," he said.

However, Kibria strongly criticised the BNP and Jatiya Party for submitting the memorandum. He said the parties

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## Govt interfering in judiciary, lawyers allege

By Staff Correspondent

The Anjibi Oikya Parishad has accused the government of "interfering once again" in the country's judiciary. It called upon the judges to work fearlessly.

Parishad made the accusation at a press conference held at the Supreme Court Lawyers Association Bhaban yesterday afternoon.

"The government has once again nakedly interfered in the country's judiciary," said convener of the Parishad Khadaker Mahboob Uddin Ahmed, referring to the public statements of the ruling Awami League leaders criticising the High Court judges who felt "embarrassed" to hear the death reference of the convicts in the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman murder case.

The AL leaders including two ministers at a public rally in the city on April 13 had criticised the "embarrassed HC judges" and announced a militant procession with sticks in hands" on April 18.

"It is the universally recognised right of the judges to feel embarrassed in trying a case," said Mahboob Uddin. "Only those who want to destroy the judiciary and stand on the ways of the normal course of law could snatch such rights of the judges," he said, urging the judges to "work fearlessly at the dictates of their conscience."

## AL blows hot against higher judiciary

By Staff Correspondent

Top leaders of ruling the Awami League including some influential ministers has criticised the higher judiciary for what they said delaying the process of execution of death sentences of the killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

They criticised the judges who felt embarrassed to hear the death references in Bangabandhu murder case and alleged that there were conspiracies to block the process.

The leaders were addressing a discussion meeting at Mahanagar Natya Mancha in the city in observance of the historic Mujibnagar Day yesterday.

The leaders including acting AL chief Sajeda Choudhury said street protests will continue till the killers are hanged. They also asked party activists to join today's programmes to press immediate execution of the verdict.

The city AL will organise a rally at Paltan Maidan in the city at 3pm. Later, AL leaders and workers with burial cloth on their heads and carrying sticks will march up to the Bangabandhu Bhaban at Dhanmondi.

As many as 33 AL leaders addressed the meeting with Mayor Mohammad Hanif in the chair. All spoke mainly about

the role of higher judiciary as regards execution of the verdict in Bangabandhu murder case.

Sajeda Choudhury urged the President and the Chief Justice to remove those judges who felt embarrassed to hear the death reference.

"Replace them with those who can ensure justice," she said.

Sajeda said leaders of her party are not afraid of cases for contempt of court. If needed, all the leaders would face such cases to press execution of the

verdict, she said.

"They (judges) are not above law. They must go by the Constitution and the will of the people... Why should they feel embarrassed?"

Sajeda, who is environment minister, urged the Chief Justice and other judges of the Supreme Court to resolve the crisis out of judges' feeling embarrassed.

"We have confidence in and respect for the courts. We don't want to take law in our hands, but we will definitely agitate for execution of the verdict," she said.

"Our agitation won't stop until Bangabandhu's killers are hanged... It is another war we will fight along with the people."

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad warned that people would put those opposing the trial of Bangabandhu's killers in the dock. "No matter, if he is a judge or a minister or an opposition leader."

He urged the people to identify those "obstructing" execution of death sentences of the killers.

Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed questioned why the judges felt embarrassed. There was no situation for the judges to feel embarrassed."

The Dhaka-based IJO at its meeting here recently failed to

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## EC not adequately equipped to ensure fair polls

BNP Secretary General observes

By Nurul Kabir

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan MP thinks that the Election Commission is not yet equipped with adequate power and logistics to ensure "unquestionably free and fair" national elections.

"When in government, we got a law passed strengthening the Commission. But till now, it does not have adequate field-level officials with required power and logistics to control the entire electoral process," he said. "The Commission is to depend largely on various cadre services of the state, especially administration cadre, to conduct any polls."

Bhuiyan made the observations in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star last week.

Noting that election is the most important component of democracy, the BNP leader said people lose faith in democracy itself when electoral system remains questionable. "I am therefore all for strengthening the EC in every possible way."

When his attention was drawn to the fact that the EC has no official of its own at thana-level and its district level officials belong to grade IX, four grades lower than District Livestock Officer and three grades lower than even Thana

As part of our interview series, the views of Gano Forum chief Dr. Kamal Hossain will be published tomorrow.



Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan

Agriculture Officer, Bhuiyan emphatically said. "The EC must have its own official at thana level and the post of its district level official must be upgraded."

But mere upgrading of post is not a complete solution to the problem of strengthening the Election Commission. They

should be provided with adequate legal authority and sufficient logistic support so that they can effectively control the electoral process. A law can be made in this regard, if necessary."

## Political Party Registration

The BNP leader is "ready to accept a comprehensive law requiring registration of political parties, if others agree."

He is also not opposed to the idea of auditing party funds annually. "But I am not sure that the system would effectively help remove adverse influence of money over the political process. What to do you do if the parties submit false statements?" Bhuiyan asked. "What is important is to devise a system that would reduce the overall cost of political activities."

"Say, holding a big public rally or bringing out a big procession cost a political party a huge amount of money these days. If the political parties concerned reach a consensus that they would no longer go for such programmes, the cost of political activities would automatically come down."

Bhuiyan believes that There

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## Bangladesh yet to benefit from transit accord with Nepal

By M Anwarul Haq

Lack of concrete measures to improve rail and road infrastructure and absence of a comprehensive motor vehicle agreement are depriving Bangladesh of a huge amount of foreign exchange earning from transit facilities for Nepalese commodities, sources concerned said.

Bangladesh could also develop its trucking industry and create employment opportunity for a large number of people in the service sector just by providing access to Mongla port for a major portion of the over one million tons of goods the landlocked Himalayan Kingdom exports and imports every year.

The opportunity of handling almost the entire bulk of cargo is now lost to Bangladesh as it is routed through India's Calcutta port. This also causes de-

lay and higher expenses, annoying Nepalese traders and customers, the sources pointed out.

Although Dhaka and Kathmandu had signed a transit agreement more than two and a half years ago on September 1, 1997, the route is still to be operational in the true sense through removal of a number of impediments and immediate signing of a comprehensive motor vehicle agreement between the two countries.

The first transit agreement between Bangladesh and Nepal was signed in 1976. It remained ineffective for nearly two decades till the then Indian government headed by prime minister I K Gujral decided to permit Nepal to use the 61 km corridor through Bangladesh in Bangladesh and Kakaravita

in Nepal.

However, Nepalese businessmen are unable to make use of the transit facility provided by Dhaka and Delhi, particularly because Bangladesh has not yet developed necessary infrastructure for carrying of goods by trucks to Mongla port from Nepal.

Due to lack of a motor vehicle agreement, Nepalese trucks do not have direct access to Mongla port. They have to transfer their cargo to Bangladesh carriers, which however is not in a position to carry those due to poor infrastructure from Bangladesh transit point.

Nepalese Commerce Minister Ram Krishna Tamrakar, who was on a visit to Bangladesh recently, said that a

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when Pakistani officials quoted him as offering to mediate on Kashmir. The reports infuriated India and overshadowed a visit by Queen Elizabeth.

"We have to be asked for help before we can be of assistance," Cook said today, choosing his words with care.

He also had warm words for his hosts, praising India as an emerging power of the 21st century and a "natural contender" for a prized permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.

**Nuclear Dialogue**

The two ministers agreed, at India's suggestion, to open a formal dialogue on non-proliferation and disarmament. Officials from both sides will meet

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## Conflict over CCCI presidency Javed trying to influence probe body: Kamaluddin

By Staff Correspondent

The Chittagong chamber president Kamaluddin Ahmed said yesterday that Saifuzzaman Chowdhury Javed, who allegedly took over the office of the chamber president illegally last month, was trying to influence the Commerce Ministry inquiry committee to have its report in his favour.

As Javed took over the presidency of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) without any election, the Commerce Ministry formed a one-member committee to probe the incident. Although the committee has finished the work, it is yet to publish the report.

Javed, the senior vice-president of CCCI, allegedly tried to 'grab' the president post of the

chamber on March 5.

However, Javed was declared president of the chamber on March 14 following a meeting of the board of directors. Javed's associates at the chamber claimed at that time that the board brought a no-confidence motion against the incumbent president, Kamaluddin Ahmed, and made Javed the acting president.

The CCCI board also forfeited Kamal's membership. They also claimed that 17 out of 24 directors were present at that meeting and endorsed the decision.

Javed is the son of former Awami League leader Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury Babu who removed the chairman of a

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## Cook's call for 'serious dialogue' on Kashmir

NEW DELHI, Apr 17: British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook urged India and Pakistan today to open "serious dialogue" over the Kashmir flash-point and called on New Delhi to sign the global nuclear test ban treaty, reports Reuters.

Cook, speaking after talks with Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh, called for restraint in the disputed Hi-

malayan territory, where India and Pakistan came close to their fourth war last year.

"I am pained by the deepening violence in Kashmir. The only way forward is through dialogue and through creating positive political conditions in Kashmir," Cook said.

But serious dialogue requires real restraint. Both are essential to make progress," he

told a news conference.

Pakistan has said it is ready for talks with its arch-rival, but India says Islamabad must first cease "cross-border terrorism" in Jammu and Kashmir in the Indian state where a separatist rebellion has raged for the past decade.

Cook was accused of stirring up a row between India and Britain nearly three years ago

when Pakistani officials quoted him as offering to mediate on Kashmir. The reports infuriated India and overshadowed a visit by Queen Elizabeth.

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**Seminar on e-commerce**

Joint Organiser —  
**The Daily Star & Chittagong Stock Exchange**

Experts on IT/Internet will speak in the Seminar

▼  
Date: 22nd April 2000, Saturday, 3.00 pm

▼  
Venue: Hotel Agrabad, Chittagong

▼  
Admission Free

▼  
**Business persons, Executives, Students are invited to participate**