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Power handover by elected govt to unelected one 'undemocratic' Says Sircar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar yesterday said it is undemocratic for an elected government to pass power to unelected representatives on dissolution of parliament.

He urged the caretaker government to hold election without delay and hand over power to the elected government.

He was speaking as the chief guest at a meeting marking the first death anniversary of former BNP secretary general KM Obaidur Rahman.

Sircar said a government that is not representative of the people lacks the ability to be in touch with the pulse of general people. It is always the politicians who can empathise with the public sufferings and they should be the ones to run the country.

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WOMEN POLICY BEING USED

Radicals out to thwart war criminal trial move

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fundamentalists have made the National Women Development Policy 2008 an issue in a bid to suppress the public demand for trial of war criminals, participants at a roundtable yesterday said.

They also criticised the interim government for their silence on the street programmes fundamental groups carried out against the government's woman policy, clearly violating the state of emergency.

Political leaders, NGO activists, women leaders and present and former advisers took part in the discussion on "Women in politics: in party, parliament and government", organised by Bangladesh Mohila Parishad and Saptahik 2000 magazine at the National Press Club.

Mohila Parishad president Aysha Khanam moderated the discussion while Kazi Sofia Akhter presented the keynote paper.

Rasheda K Chowdhury, women and children affairs adviser to the government, said fundamentalism is spreading alarmingly in the society and it is hard to imagine how far it would go in the future if proper attention is not given to the issues of education, culture and woman's empowerment.

Stressing the need for consensus on women's issues, she said women's advancement is not possible if the mainstream progressive forces do not get united.

The adviser called on politicians to create a friendly atmosphere for women so that they could come to leadership level.

Taking part in the discussion, Awami League (AL) presidium member Tofail Ahmed said while sector commanders of the liberation war were not allowed to hold their national convention in a hall room, the government is silent on the processions that fundamentalist groups brought out in the street in opposition to the woman policy.

"It'll not be good if people raise questions on the present government's neutrality when it comes to fundamentalism," he warned.

Abdur Razzak, another AL presidium member, said religious issues are brought to the forefront whenever women's issues get prominence. "The fundamentalists violated the state of emergency but no action has been taken against them," he said.

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NIKO GRAFT CASE Hasina declines to receive ACC notice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina has refused to receive the Anti-Corruption Commission's (ACC) letter asking her for a statement in her defence in the Niko graft case.

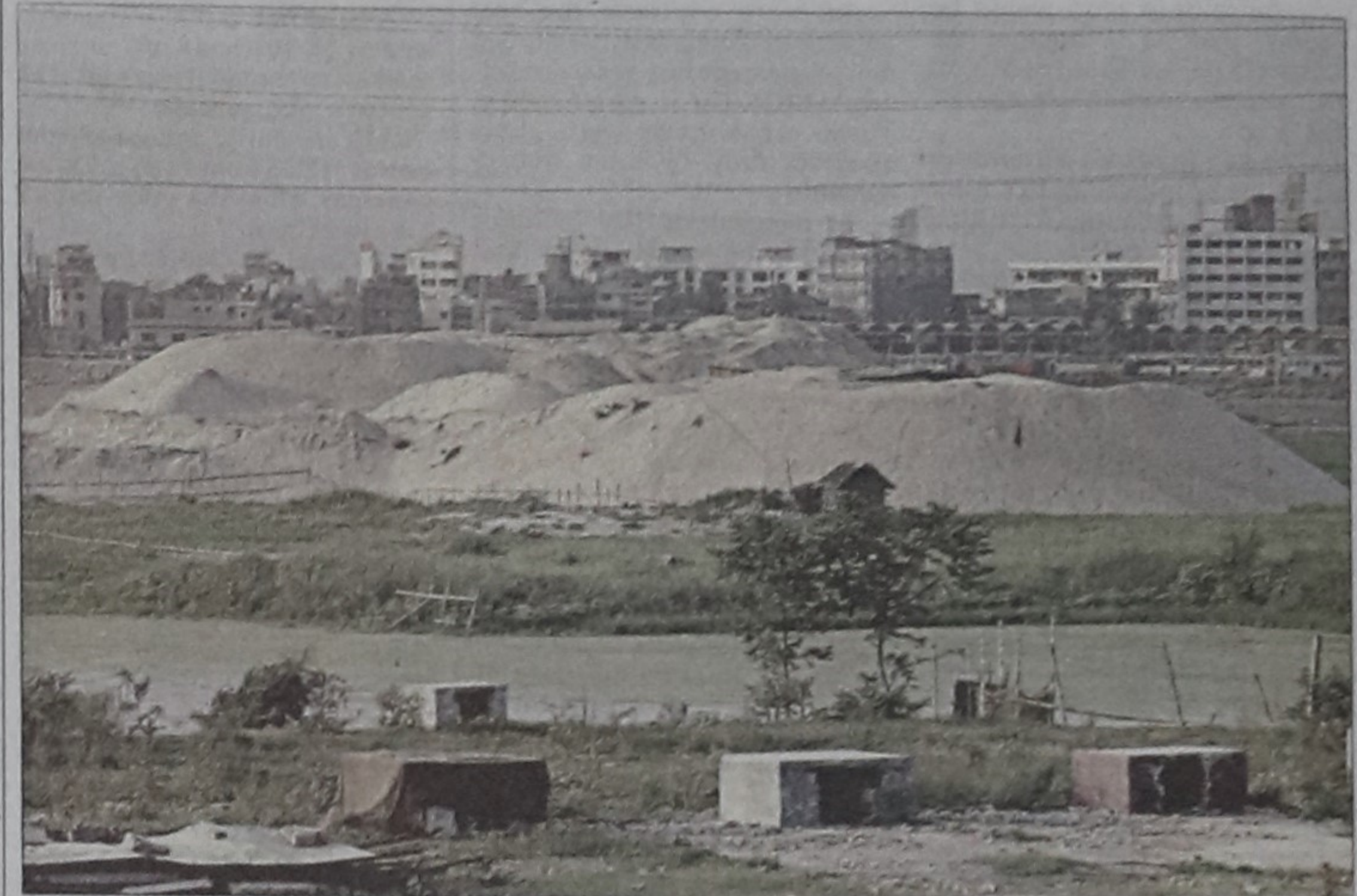
The anti-graft body issued the notice on March 13 while the jail authorities received it on March 15.

But as the former prime minister, now undergoing treatment at the Square Hospital, declined to receive it in absence of her lawyers, the jail authorities posted it on her room's wall.

While Hasina's counsels complained they were not allowed to meet their client, the jail authorities said they had arranged a meeting, but she did not agree to their arrangements.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Deputy Inspector General

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This canal behind Gabtoli Bus Terminal in the capital is being filled up by influential people. The photo shows earth piled up on the bank of the canal.

WB MD for solution to soaring prices of essentials

UNB, Jamalpur

World Bank (WB) Managing Director Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala has said prices of essentials, particularly baby food, should be kept within the buying capacity of the common people.

"I will talk to the Bangladesh government to find out a solution to control the soaring prices of essentials," she said after observing the sufferings of poor people at Depur village in Kendua Union who are badly hit by the current price hike.

The World Bank top official arrived here to visit National Nutrition Programme Centre to observe the activities of the bank-funded Social Investment

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CAMPUS UNREST 4 DU students appeal against conviction

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Four Dhaka University (DU) students, who were convicted of violating the Emergency Power Rules (EPR) on the campus August 21-23 last year, filed separate appeals with the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court yesterday challenging their convictions.

Meantime, the case filed against seven DU students for torching an army vehicle and assaulting an army man at Shahbagh intersection during the DU violence on August 23 last year was transferred to a court for its trial.

APPEALS OF FOUR STUDENTS Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) DU Unit President Hasan Mamun, its General Secretary Saiful Islam Feroz, activist Kamrul Islam Kochi, and former Chhatra Union leader

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ACC sues Shahida Obaid and 12 senior ex-officials

UNB, Dhaka

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday filed a case against 13 senior ex-officials of the Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board, Dhaka, including its former chairman, secretary, controller, deputy controller and assistant controller, for misappropriation of about Tk 24.37 lakh.

ACC Assistant Director Abu Bakar Siddique filed the first information report (FIR) with Lalbagh Police Station against former Dhaka Board chairman Shahida Obaid, secretary Harun ur Rashid, controller Farhad Hossain, deputy controller Nazmul Haq, assistant controller Abdul Rahman, CBA leader Golam Rasul and seven others for misappropriation of Tk about 24.37 lakh in the name of development of workers' union.

The case was filed under sections 109 and 409 of the penal code and section 5(2) of the Corruption Prevention Act, 1947. Shahida Obaid, wife of late BNP leader KM Obaidur Rahman, told The Daily Star over phone last night. "The case is baseless and false. We have all the documents with us. Filing a Tk 23 lakh case against 13 people is ridiculous and it's been done only to tarnish my image."



PHOTO: SHAWKAT JAMIL

A mother Warbler feeds her young ones in a nest on a mahogany tree on the Dhaka University campus. The declining greenery of the city makes such a sight rare in today's life.

Pak court meets amid looming showdown over judges

AFP, THE DAWN, Islamabad

Pakistan's top court met yesterday amid a looming showdown between the country's new parliament and President Pervez Musharraf over his sacking of dozens of judges last year.

Meanwhile the party of slain former prime minister Benazir Bhutto set to lead Pakistan's coalition government nominated a woman MP to contest for the office of national assembly speaker, officials said.

Fahmida Mirza, 52, is now all but certain to win the top post in the 342-seat lower house of parliament, which will hold the election for the post on Wednesday.

Mirza, a seasoned politician from Benazir's home province of Sindh, would be the first woman

speaker of the parliament in the 60-year history of this deeply conservative Islamic nation of 160 million people.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Abdul Hameed Dogar, appointed by Musharraf to replace the president's arch-foe Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, was due to chair the rare, full meeting of the court's 15 judges.

No agenda has been announced for the court's extraordinary meeting, which comes one day after the parliament dominated by Musharraf's opponents convened for the first time following last month's election.

Attorney General Malik Qayyum told reporters that the judges would "discuss administrative matters, but there is a

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BSMMU CORRUPTION Meet ends with no decision against suspects

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Syndicate of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) sat yesterday to discuss a review committee report on recruitment corruption there ended without any decision against those involved in the scam.

The body will discuss the issue again at its next meeting and if it favours administrative action against the corrupt officials and employees, they might be ousted from the institution, according to Syndicate members.

The BSMMU saw massive corruption in staff recruitment during the immediate past government. The university formed a seven-member investigation committee to probe the irregularities on orders of the chief adviser in last May.

The committee, headed by Prof Nazrul Islam of virology

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Tigers win finally

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh finally ended a 14-match losing streak thanks to an eight-wicket win against lightweights Ireland in the first game of the three-ODI series at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

After the initial burst by man-of-the-match Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, a 130-run unbeaten third wicket stand between Shahrar Nafees and captain Mohammad Ashraful fashioned the easy win as well as avenged the Tigers' loss to the Irish in a Super Eights match of last year's World Cup in the West Indies.

Bangladesh's last win also came in that World Cup and that was against mighty South Africa.

In front of a strong 15,000 crowd who braved the immense heat, Bangladesh first wrapped up their opponents for 185 and then chased down the target reaching 186 in 39.5 overs.

The victory provided some sort of boost for Bangladesh after a demoralising home series against

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ACC forms team to probe graft in RHD

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As a part of the drive against institutional graft the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) has formed a four-member team to investigate graft in Roads & Highways Department (RHD).

"According to an earlier decision of the commission to investigate institutional corruption, it has recently decided to probe issues like tender process, misuse of money, and other irregularities in Roads & Highways Department," said ACC Director General (admin) Col Hanif Iqbal.

The four-member team headed by ACC Deputy Director Ashraf Ali Faruq also includes assistant directors M Kamruzzaman and Aziz Bhuiyan, and Field Officer Saifullah M Emran.

Hanif told reporters that the commission already sent a letter to the communications secretary

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Emon thrived on Ctg gunrunner's supply

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Chittagong arms dealer supplied dreaded criminal Sanjiddul Islam Emon with illegal weapons, which are now in possession of eight top listed criminals of the city.

Emon told Criminal Investigation Department (CID) interrogators that the Chittagong gunrunner, Sunil Dey, former Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leader of MES College, is now hiding in India.

Sunil, who fled to India in 2004, is accused in around 15 cases including the killing of superintendent of police Bashirul at Nandan Kanan.

He was carrying out arms trade and criminal activities under the shelter of a Chittagong-based top Awami League leader. He was also associated with Chittagong City

Corporation ward commissioner Mamun and AL cadres Dulu and Mahim.

Emon believes Sunil has a consolidated position in India and helped the Kolkata police to arrest him as they were engaged in a feud across the border.

The CID sources said they have already started a mission to arrest Emon's associates who are now keeping his over 20 firearms in their possession. Emon has admitted that his arms cache includes an AK47 assault rifle.

The dreaded criminal's eight associates are Bara Manik, Cat Babu, Nakkata Bashar, Chacha Zahid, Garom Monir, Killer Abul alias Dakat Abul, Michael Titu and Lal.

Sources said the eight hailed from Jigatola, Mohammadpur, Rayerbazar and Hazaribagh in the

capital and are still in the country. Quoting Emon, an interrogator said Bara Manik now possesses a cache of eight of his illegal firearms including the AK47.

Emon told the CID interrogators Bara Manik hailed from Pabna who went into hiding after Chhoto Manik was killed in Rab 'crossfire' in Mohammadpur. He also admitted that he had contacted Bara Manik before he was arrested in Kolkata.

CID sources said both Emon and Ishaq Ali, a smuggling ring member, will be interrogated at the Taskforce for Interrogation (TFI) cell within a day or two.

The two were deported from India on March 8 and are now on a five-day remand since Monday. Earlier, they were remanded for eight days.

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AL, allies for quick return to democracy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Key leaders of different political parties yesterday strongly demanded that the caretaker government reinstates democracy in the country as soon as possible through holding a free, fair and credible election within the time stipulated by the Election Commission's (EC) roadmap.

They also asked the interim administration to release detained former premier also Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina immediately, and to send her to the US for better treatment according to her doctors' recommendations.

Addressing a discussion in the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh in the capital, they also said foreign and army powers' influence in national politics must cease to exist.

AL organised the discussion marking the 88th birth anniversary

of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, father of the nation, with acting party chief, Zillur Rahman, in the chair.

The Workers Party of Bangladesh, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Ganotantri Party, National Awami Party (NAP), Jatiya Party (JP-Manju), Samyabadi Dal, Gono Forum, Communist Kendra (CK), and Gono Azadi League (GAL) leaders attended the discussion.

Paying hearty tributes to the great leader of the Bangalee nation, they urged the government to officially recognise Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the father of the nation, and to promulgate an ordinance making it mandatory to display his portrait in all government and non-government

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

HASINA'S EXTORTION CASE Hearing on govt appeal adjourned till April 23

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday adjourned until April 23 the hearing on the government appeal against a High Court order that quashed the proceedings of the Tk 2.99 extortion case against former premier Sheikh Hasina and declared illegal bringing of the case under Emergency Power Rules (EPR).

After hearing on the appeal for three consecutive days, a seven-member full bench of the SC, headed by Chief Justice Ruhul Amin, adjourned hearing for more than a month.

Additional Attorney General

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Sector commanders firm on holding Mar 21 convention

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sector Commanders' Forum (SCF) yesterday vowed to carry on with their plan to hold national convention on March 21 after their earlier bid was thwarted as authorities did not give them permission to assemble.

The convention is scheduled to be held at Bangladesh China Friendship Conference Centre (BCFCC). But the commanders said if authorities obstruct them on their way to the BCFCC, they would hold the meeting at the place they are stopped.

The sector commanders were speaking at a press conference at the SCF head office at Banani in the city. The SCF is a platform of commanders who led the country's

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2



PHOTO: STAR

Using a frail bamboo bridge, schoolchildren cross Norai river at Trimohoni of Khilgaon in the capital as the construction work on a concrete bridge remained incomplete for several years.

Prayer Timing March 19 table with columns for Fajr, Zohr, Asr, Maghrib, Esha and times for Azan and Jamaat.