



Indian Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao calls on Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at her Gulshan office in the city yesterday. Party Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain, second from right, and Khaleda's foreign affairs adviser Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury, extreme right, and Indian High Commissioner Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty, extreme left, were present on the occasion.

## Amend UP Act to end discrimination

Chairmen, members urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chairmen and members of Union Parishad (UP) of Dhaka Division yesterday demanded amendment to a provision of the Union Parishad Act-2009 to end discrimination between the UP and municipality chairmen.

"Clause 34 of the act empowered the UNO to remove any UP chairman from his post if any allegation is found against him. But the provision is not applicable for the municipality chairmen. It creates discrimination between the UP and municipality chairmen. We categorically demand amendment to this provision," they said.

They placed their demands at a consultation meeting organised by the Bangladesh Union Parishad Forum at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

They demanded holding of UP election in

January next year, because the tenure of the current chairmen and members will expire then.

They also demanded to stop interference of lawmakers in development activities of union parishads.

Mahbubur Rahman Tulu, president of the forum, said all the successive governments have weakened the union parishads, though the UP representatives keep the closest contact with local people.

Presiding over the meeting, Ataharul Islam Bulbul, general secretary of the forum, demanded the government to allocate fund directly to union parishads so that they can carry out their development works.

Shawkat Mahmud, president of the National Press Club, also spoke at the programme.

Around 50 UP chairmen and members from Dhaka Division participated at the consultation meeting.

## IDUs pose threat of HIV infection: Health secy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a programme yesterday called for improving socio-economic condition of the people to reduce the number of Injecting Drug Users (IDUs), the most high-risk group for HIV/AIDS.

The number of IDUs has been increasing in the country alarmingly and they are posing threat of HIV infection, Health Secretary Sheikh Altaf Ali said, adding that only counselling and other services are not enough to wean them of this bad habit.

HASAB (HIV/AIDS and STD Alliance Bangladesh) organised the programme on the occasion of its 15th anniversary at Bangabandhu International Conference - were also present.

Centre in the city. The slogan of the celebrations was 'Success Past -- Dream Ahead'.

Speaking as the chief guest, State Minister for Mujibur Rahman Fakir said that government along with the NGOs has been working to combat HIV/AIDS. HASAB Executive Director Dr Nazneen Akhter presented the activities of the organisation and its vision.

She pointed out that HIV/AIDS awareness and capacity building programme are still inadequate at university level, as the youths are considered a vulnerable group.

Dr Omar Farook Chowdhury presided over the session. Alvero Bermejo, executive director of International HIV/AIDS Alliance, UK, and representatives of the partner NGOs of HASAB - were also present.

## 'Form JS caucus to protect environment'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environmentalists yesterday urged the government to set up a parliamentary environmental caucus to strengthen lawmakers' role in protecting the biodiversity.

They said the administration and the politicians are not playing their role prop-

erly, instead they are often endorsing activities that are degrading the nature.

They called on all to declare the next decade as the environment conservation decade in an all-out effort to save the earth for the next generation.

The environmentalists said this at the first organisational convention of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa)

and its 8th general assembly organised by Bapa at a city restaurant.

Bapa Chairman Prof Muzaffer Ahmad stressed the need for promoting judicial activism and people's participation in management of the environment.

Referring to Tipaimukh dam, he said the plan of the dam is still not clear

to many, adding that transparency is urgent regarding the matter.

Bapa General Secretary Dr Md Abdul Matin, Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, Prof Bazlul Haque Khandaker, Flora Bably Talang, ASM Mizanur Rahman, Dr Mahmudur Rahman and Dr Ishrat Islam spoke at the programme.

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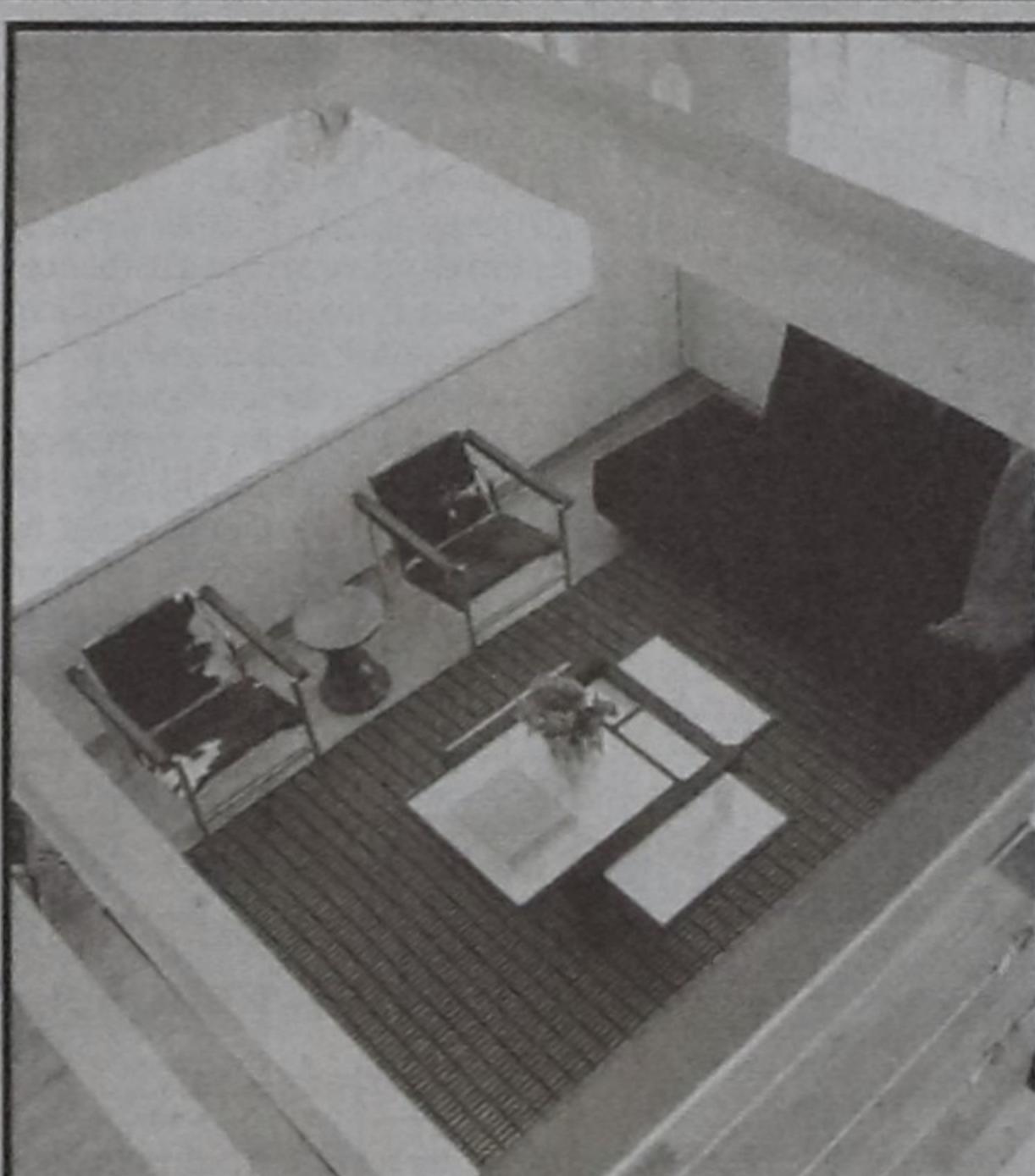
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