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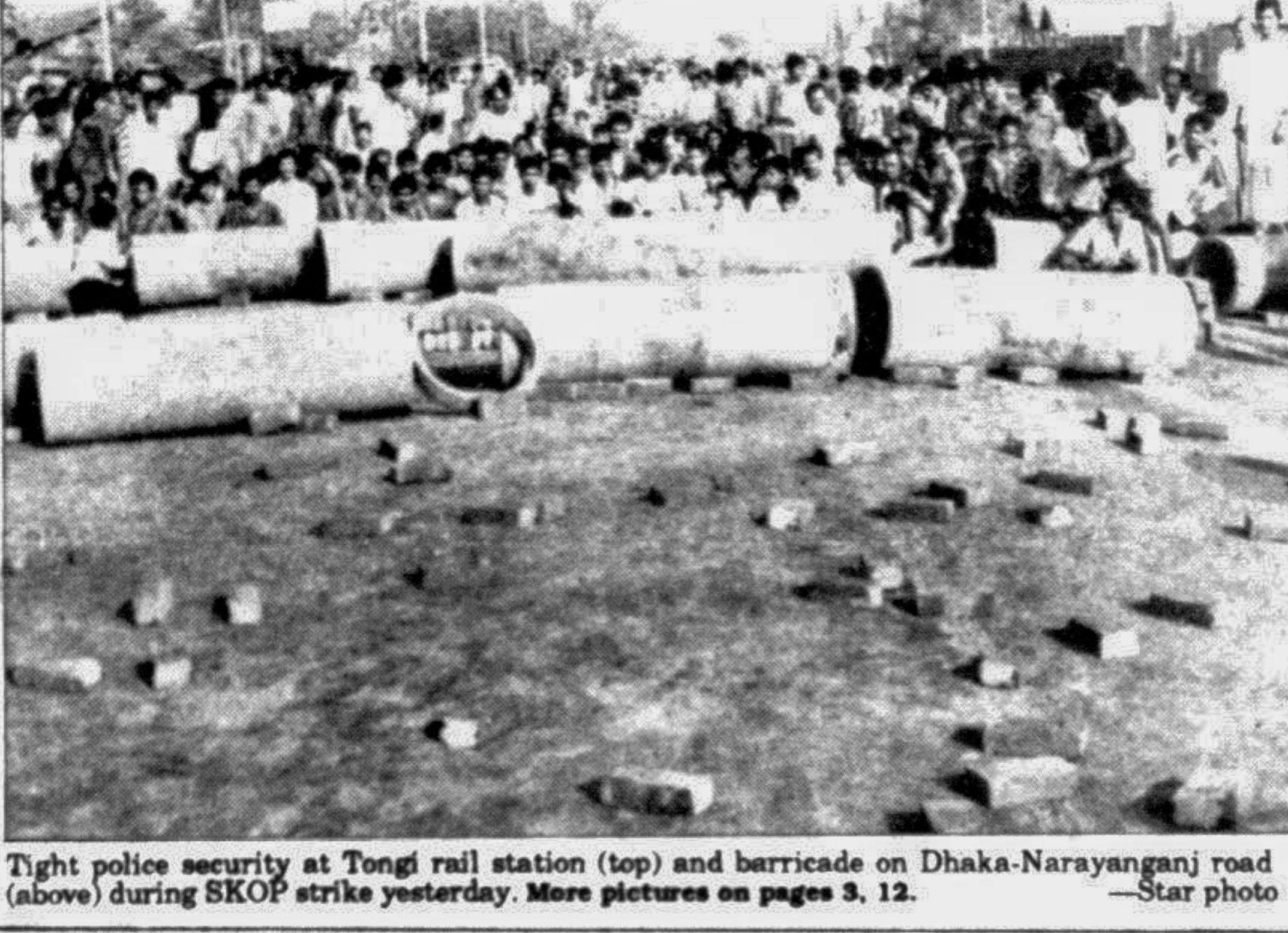
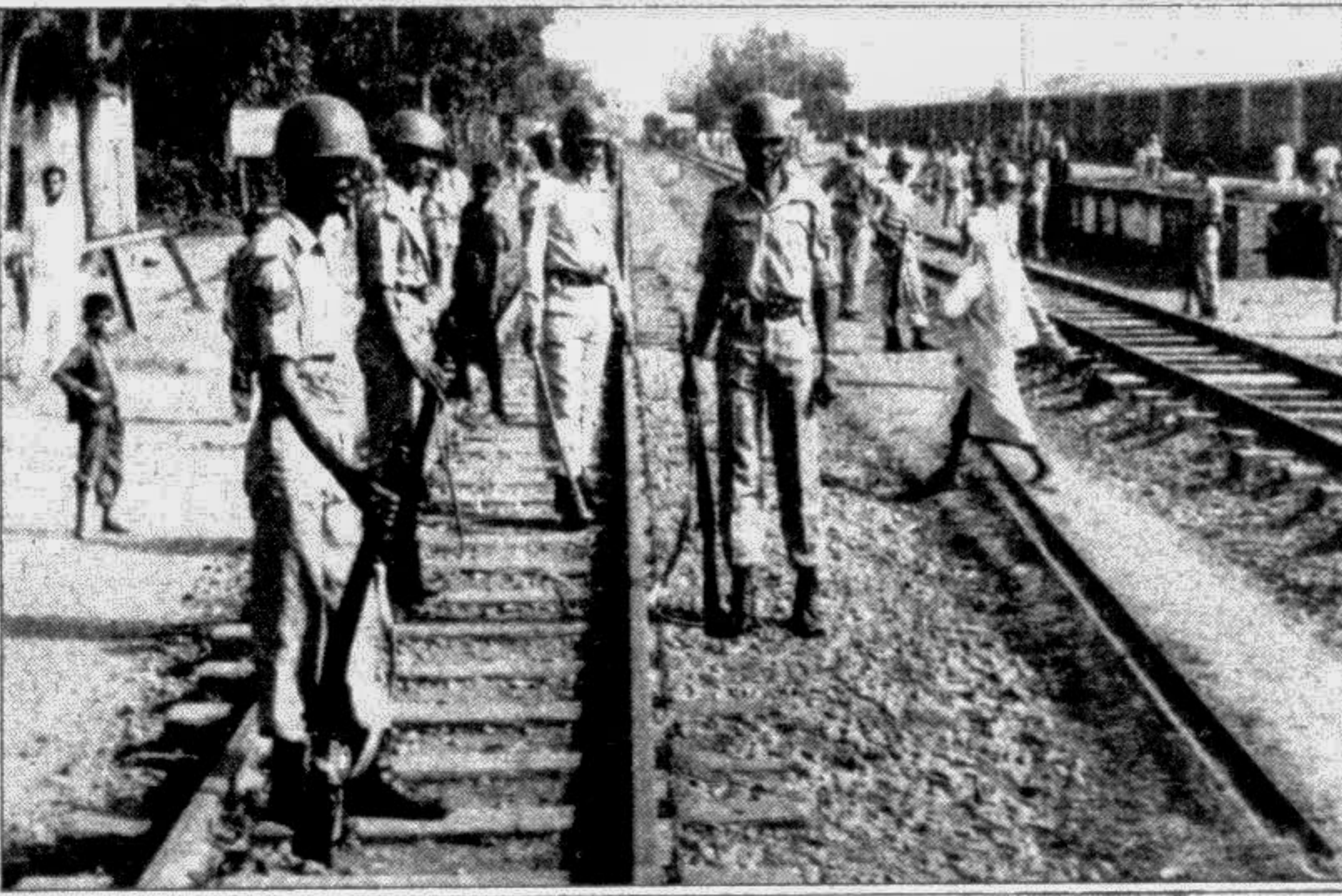
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Over 60 injured across country Sporadic clashes mark first day of SKOP shutdown



Tight police security at Tongi rail station (top) and barricade on Dhaka-Narayanganj road (above) during SKOP strike yesterday. More pictures on pages 3, 12. —Star photo

By Staff Correspondent

Sporadic clashes left over 60 persons injured on the first day of the 48-hour nationwide strike called by the Srani Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP), consisting of 18 trade union federations.

Road and rail communications were disrupted at different places around the country during the strike, which began at 6 am Monday, due to barricades put up by the agitating workers.

However, most cities and district towns were not affected by the strike which was concentrated mostly around the industrial areas.

In Dhaka city life remained normal and banks and offices operated normally. Both private and public transports plied the streets as the brisk Eid sales continued in all the markets.

The strike affected most industries in Tejgaon and Hajrabad and a large number of garment factories in the city.

The garments factory workers brought out a procession in Malibagh area which was attacked allegedly by anti-strike elements and later police lathicharged to break up the procession near Rampura bridge. About 10 persons were injured during the clash. Striking workers also brought out processions in the Tejgaon industrial area.

At Postagola, 15 persons were injured when a procession of striking workers was attacked Monday morning by a group that opposed the strike.

SKOP leaders claimed 'total success' of the strike in all the industrial areas around the country while a government announcement said that regular production was achieved at 14 of the 35 mills under Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) on the day.

In the private sector, the Bangladesh Jute Mills Association (BJMA) also

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Cabinet okays Act amendments Move to widen Bangladesh Bank's powers

The cabinet in a meeting yesterday approved the proposed amendments to the Banking Companies Act 1991 placed by the Ministry of Finance, reports UNB.

Officials said the approval was given in the regular weekly meeting of the cabinet held at Bangabhaban with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair. The proposed amendments aim at vesting more authority to the Bangladesh Bank in its regulatory and supervisory functions.

The amendments also envisage to bring rationality in

Govt will welcome private investment in power sector

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman said here yesterday that the government would welcome private sector participation in the power sector for meeting domestic demand, generating employment, improving efficiency and reducing costs, reports BSS.

He made this comment when a team led by President of Intercontinental Energy Group of USA Stephen Roy called on him yesterday at his secretariat chamber. US Ambassador to Bangladesh William B Milam was also present on the occasion.

'Enact laws to protect interest of consumers'

Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) yesterday called for enacting necessary laws and amendments for protecting the rights and interests of the consumers, reports BSS.

In a resolution adopted in a discussion held at the Jatiya Press Club, the association also called for introduction of a consumers' ombudsman system under a package deal for identifying the problems of the consumers and their solutions.

Presided over by the CAB President Borhan Ahmed, the discussion was addressed by Rashed Khan Menon, MP, CAB General Secretary, Sarwar Jahan and coordinator Khondkar Abul Quayum.

The speakers observed that due to the operation of free market economy, different kinds of foreign foods has flooded the market and pleaded for measures to control such imports of unnecessary items like powdered milk and cigarettes.

25 more die of diarrhoea

Twenty five people died yesterday as the diarrhoeal situation further deteriorated in the country despite government and non-government efforts to contain the epidemic, reports UNB.

Diarrhoea Control Room sources here said yesterday the killer disease attacked some 1,772 people in 14 districts during the period.

The latest deaths brought the toll from the epidemic to 1,188 since its outbreak in early January.

Some 75,693 people have been attacked by the water-borne bacteria across the country, particularly in eight southern districts, the control room sources said.

Of the latest death figure, 14 came from Laxmipur, three from Jhalakati, one from Bagherhat, one from Patuakhali, two from Khulna, one from Barisal and three from Bhola.

Ambassador Osmani may succeed Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman

Star Report

Ambassador Mustafizur Rahman and Ambassador Mueh R Osmani are being tipped to succeed Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman who is likely to be posted abroad after the forthcoming SAARC summit.

According to informed sources, the latter's chances are brighter.

Rahman, who joined the then Pakistan Foreign Service in 1964 but climbed up to join the 1962 batch with a two-year ante dated seniority that he was rewarded after the Liberation War, has been in Moscow since December 1990.

Osmani, a 1964 CSP who was later inducted into the Bangladesh Foreign Service after Liberation, has been in Geneva as the country's Permanent Representative to the UN offices there since May 1991.

According to the sources, the authorities in Dhaka would prefer Osmani to Rahman because of some of the latter's credentials. Rahman has a

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NEWS BRIEFS

PM takes iftar with freedom fighters
 Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday had her iftar with members of Mukti Juddha Central Command Council at Sugandha. Among others, members of the parliament attended the iftar, reports BSS.

AL advisory body meet today
 A meeting of Awami League Advisory Council will be held here today (Tuesday) at 10 am. Party President Sheikh Hasina will chair the meeting, reports UNB.

Govt to pay salary Mar 21
 The government has decided to pay salary for the month of March to the non-gazetted employees of government, semi-government and autonomous bodies on March 21 as Eid-ul-Fitr will be celebrated late this month. According to government calendar for 1993 the Eid-ul-Fitr is likely to be celebrated on March 25 which depends on the sighting of the moon, reports BSS.

IAEA meet on DPRK Thursday
 VIENNA, Mar 15: The Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) will hold an emergency meeting here Thursday to discuss North Korea's withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), a spokesman said today. The meeting will discuss ways of easing the international isolation of North Korea, which has drawn threats of the sanctions for withdrawing from the NPT and refusing to allow IAEA inspectors access to two of its nuclear sites, agency officials said, reports AFP.

Sikh group claims responsibility for blasts Bombay police arrest two 'prime suspects'

BOMBAY, Mar 15: In a major breakthrough, the Bombay police today arrested two local persons, prime suspects in connection with the seizure of high-powered bombs from three scooters even as the Maharashtra Chief Minister Sharad Pawar asserted in the State Assembly that police 'are on the right trail' to unearth the international conspiracy to stall foreign investments in India, reports PTI, Reuter, AP and AFP.

Meanwhile, a team of Punjab police was on its way to the city to assist their Bombay counterparts following a claim by 'Khalistan Commando Force' (Jaffarwal) group in Jalandhar that it was responsible for the blasts.

In a telephonic call to Jalandhar Bureau of the Press Trust of India, the caller identifying himself as Sardool Singh Khalsa, spokesman of the outfit, said they had done it to show the government at the centre and in Punjab that they were still active.

Addressing a crowded press conference here this evening, the Police Commissioner, A.S. Samra, said Farid Bhai, a scooter dealer based in Byculla, central Bombay, and his mechanic, Ashgar Ali Tahir Ali, were rounded up and would be produced before a court tomorrow.

The dealer had disclosed that he sold three brand new scooters to his mechanic who in turn disposed off the vehicles on March 10 and 11 for cash payments to some unknown persons.

The police, however, failed to nab two others believed to be involved in hotel explosions.

Meanwhile, the police bomb squad today defused 40kgs of explosives found in two more scooters in crowded localities of south Bombay.

Experts defused the bombs in Bombay's gold and diamond bazaar today.

These would have blown up the entire gold and diamond markets," Nandkumar Chowgale, head of the police bomb squad, told reporters.

The two, who managed to flee were Pilloo Khan, a smuggler and Mangesh Pawar, a hired killer, when police tried to corner them for interrogation in connection with explosions in Centaur and Sea Rock hotels. The duo escaped after firing from their AK-56 rifles, injuring a police sub-inspector near Chandan Cinema in Juhu.

The Police Commissioner said one more brand new scooter of grey stone colour sold by the dealer had not been traced, raising apprehensions that a potential scooter bomb was ticking somewhere in the city. He gave the scooter's chassis number as 01915 and appeared to the people to look out for the vehicle.

Of the three scooters sold by them, one was located at Dadar yesterday. The second scooter found in Zaveri Bazaar

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Industrial function disrupted in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Mar 15: The SKOP called 48-hour shutdown paralysed industrial operation, rail and road communication here today.

The mills and factories at Nasirabad, Kalurghat, Sitakundu industrial belts remained closed today in the absence of workers, sources said. The industrial belts also remained tense as the striking workers staged demonstrations and put up barricades at different places to force suspension of rail and road communication, sources added.

According to police and witnesses, barricades were put up at Kumira point on Dhaka-Chittagong Highway in Sitakundu, at Oxygen crossing near Amin Jute Mills, and at Muradpur near Nasirabad industrial belt.

Trains which left Chittagong railway station in the morning became stranded at Kumira point and the road transports also faced similar

See Page 12 Col 3

Villagers gouge out eyes of 2 Rival partymen kidnap, kill 4 in Jhenidah

JHENIDAH, Mar 15: Four people were kidnapped and slaughtered by an armed group at village Bora in sadar thana early today in a continued feud between two outlawed parties, reports UNB.

The dead were identified as Abdus Sattar (60) and his son Abdul Karim of village Matkumra, Rahaj Uddin (30) of village Chorkol and another Rahaj Uddin (35) of Sripur.

Sources said a group of 30-35 gunmen stormed the houses of the four and kidnapped them. The miscreants later killed them in the field of village Bora.

Police suspected that the killing was outcome of the bloody conflict between two outlawed parties.

The victims were suspected to be members of Biplobi Communist Party (Huq group) and the killers to be activists of Purbabanglar Communist Party.

At least 16 people have been killed during the last 14 days in the district in the feud.

A Magura report says, villagers caught two members of an outlawed party alongwith a gun in an armed encounter at a village in sadar thana today and gouged their eyes.

Police and witnesses said Sukial (32) of Bogra village in Shailakupa thana and Polash (30) of village Milemari in Harinakunda thana were captured with a cut-rifle and nine bullets at village Doramatna.

Sources said the fighting occurred when about a dozen gunmen of the Biplobi Communist Party attacked the village and demanded tolls from the villagers.

At one stage, the villagers gheraoed the gunmen when the clash ensued.

At least 20 rounds of fire were shot during the clash, with no reports of injury. Others in the band escaped firing guns.

Later, the mob scooped out the eyes of the two outlaws. They were handed over to Magura police and hospitalized.

Police said the arrested had recently served 7 years in jail in different cases.

Gunmen loot a dozen shops at Yameni Market

By DMCH Correspondent

Gunmen ransacked at least a dozen of shops and looted cash and sarces worth about Taka one lakh during a 15-minute-rampage at Peer Yameni Market at Gulistan in the city Monday.

The attackers exploded crackers and left several persons injured during the raid at the market at around 2 pm yesterday.

Of the injured, five — Rahim, Majid, Badsha, Yasin and Shameem, were treated at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Witnesses said that the raid was a sequel to a previous quarrel between two groups of hawkers of the market.

Visit extremely rewarding, says Mitterrand's aide

Madame Anne Lauvergeon, Special Adviser to the President of the France, yesterday described her visit to Bangladesh as 'very useful' and said she would report back to President Francois Mitterrand a lot of 'positive things' about Bangladesh, reports BSS.

"My visit to Bangladesh has been brief but it has been extremely rewarding — I could know this country well and by meeting with the government leaders including Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia were extremely useful", she told newsmen prior to her departure ending a two-day visit.

The Special Advisor, in addition to discussions with the government leaders, yesterday morning flew to Jamalpur to see for herself the flood control priority projects in which France is involved.

"I am impressed to see that people in the grass-root level are involved in evolving project to control floods as the government here has initiated discussions at local levels in schemes to contain the on-

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Sehri, Iftar Timings

Ram	Mar	Sehri	Iftar
21	16	—	6.14 pm
22	17	4.46 am	6.15 pm

Blizzard claims 112 lives in America

WASHINGTON, Mar 15: At least 112 people died in the storm which virtually paralysed the South and East of the United States over the weekend, according to the latest official death toll released today, reports AFP.

The storm also claimed three lives in Cuba and four in Canada, while three sailors were killed and four others were still missing after a Honduran cargo vessel sank in the Gulf of Mexico off the Florida coast.

The storm, which was today heading out into the Atlantic after leaving the Northeastern American seaboard, was the most violent since a tempest in January 1966 which killed 165, and has been dubbed as the "storm of the century."

After forming in the Gulf of Mexico, the storm first struck the South and East of the United States over the weekend, according to the latest official death toll released today, reports AFP.

Some three million homes were without electricity as hurricane force winds and driving snow brought down cables, two million of them in Florida and most of the rest in Georgia and Alabama.

By Sunday, snow was no longer falling but a blizzard warning was in effect in Eastern New York and Massachusetts, as winds over 100 miles (160 kilometers) an hour and biting cold were adding the woes.

The worst affected state was Florida, where 26 people died even as the state struggled to recover from Hurricane Andrew, which killed 55 last summer.

The next worst hit was Pennsylvania, with 19 dead, while New York reported 14 killed, Tennessee eight and Alabama seven.

Most of the victims died of heart attacks caused by coping with snow and intense cold, reports said. Five people died to heart attacks while shovelling snow, two of them in New York, where one man was buried by snow.

Two Alabama residents were found dead just meters (feet) from warmth and safety while a third died in a fire while trying to warm his home. A homeless man with amputated legs in Atlanta, Georgia, froze to death.

President Bill Clinton pledged federal assistance to the hardest hit area. A state of emergency was in force in 11 states Sunday and 21 Florida counties were declared a disaster area eligible for federal assistance, in all 17 states reported deaths resulting from the storm.

The storm forced the closure of airports in Atlanta, Washington, New York and Boston, Washington and New York (New Jersey) airport reopened for a number of flights Sunday evening.

A month after bloodbath — III Local BNP splits over APSU move in RU

From Anisuzzaman and Sumon Shahid

RAJSHAHI, Mar 14: Difference of opinion among the local BNP leaders has weakened the activities of the anti-Jamaat All Party Student Alliance (APSU) forged after the February 6 incident on the Rajshahi University campus.

One group of the ruling party leaders said that the BNP high command was unhappy over joining the alliance while the other group disagreed.

"It was a temporary arrangement to tackle the situa-

tion," Advocate Ekhlake Hossain, city unit president of the BNP told The Daily Star in an interview.

"From now on there will be no programme under the all-party banner," he confirmed without mentioning names of the central leaders.

But another BNP leader and Mayor of the Rajshahi City Corporation Mizanur Rahman Minu contradicted Hossain's version and said that an all-

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