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Corruption charges refuted

Opposition out to malign govt: PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday rebutted opposition charges, saying those who were steeped in corruption while in power are now accusing ministers to malign the popular BNP government, reports UNB.

In an oblique reference to the Awami League, she said an opposition political party had launched a propaganda campaign to discredit her democratic government.

"They have now joined hands with those ousted in a mass movement for indulging in corruption and chaos," Begum Zia said, inaugurating the 3rd biennial council of the Dhaka city unit of the Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal, the labour front of the ruling BNP, at the Institution of Engineers.

"They are out to destroy the country by obstructing the development activities initiated by the present government," she warned.

Continuing her scathing criticism to the opposition which has brought corruption charges against some of her cabinet colleagues in and outside Parliament, the Prime Minister reminded all that the wrong policies, corruption and



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing the third biennial conference of the Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal, Dhaka city unit, at the Institution of Engineers yesterday.—PID photo

Govt-opposition parley over JS probe body continues

Behind-the-scenes parleys are on to prepare the ground for a dialogue between the ruling party and the opposition to work out an agreed terms of reference for the proposed parliamentary committee to probe allegations against Irrigation and Flood Control Minister Majid-ul Haq and his ministry.

Political sources told UNB that a move is underway from the government side to sit with the opposition and find out a formula to revive the probe committee with agreed terms of reference and carry out its investigation into the opposition's charges of corruption.

The two sides had informal telephonic conversations about a formal meeting but nothing tangible has yet been achieved, the sources said.

They said Chief Whip

Khandaker Delwar Hossain had contacted the acting Leader of the Opposition, Abdus Samad Azad, about a meeting between the government party and the opposition. But there has not yet been any communication between Deputy Leader of the House Dr Badruddoza Chowdhury and Abdus Samad Azad.

Jatiya Party leader Barrister Maudud Ahmed, MP, is also involved in the move for a dialogue between the ruling party and the opposition, the sources said.

The opposition has been demanding the functioning of the parliamentary committee on amended terms of reference for effective investigation about the charges brought by Awami League leader Tofael Ahmed against Majid-ul Haq and his ministry. Meanwhile, leaders of opposition parties and groups in Parliament met at the Sangsad Bhaban yesterday with acting Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad in the chair, discussing their strategy in support of the functioning of the probe committee with amended terms of reference.

Briefing reporters, opposition Chief Whip Mohammad Nasim said the opposition would unitedly put forward their demand for functioning of the parliamentary probe committee when the House meets at 7-30 pm today.

Abdus Samad Azad will initiate discussion in the House to renew the opposition demand for the parliamentary committee with amended terms of reference, Nasim said.

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Population Day today

Three children born every second

By Staff Correspondent

The world's population growth has reached its fastest ever rate with three children born every second and more than 2.50 lakh a day.

With such pace of growth in the backdrop, the World Population Day will be observed in Bangladesh today as elsewhere in the world.

The day is being observed every year under the auspices of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to highlight the adverse effects of population growth and increased awareness among the people to accept family planning.

The theme of the day this year is "The Individual and the World: Population, Migration and Development."

Different government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have drawn up elaborate programmes to mark the day.

National dailies will bring out special supplements and radio and TV will put out special programmes to heighten public awareness on population problems of the country.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas will formally inaugurate the day's programme at a function at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium at 10-30 am today.

In a message on the day, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has urged all quarters irrespective of political affiliation to work unitedly for turning the family planning programme into a social movement for planned development of the population.

She said that Bangladesh, as

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Saudi move to settle disputes

Benazir turns down Sharif's invitation

ISLAMABAD, July 10: A war by letter between Pakistan's two main political rivals intensified today when opposition leader Benazir Bhutto turned down an invitation from Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to a working dinner to resolve their differences, reports Reuter.

"I have time and again stated that a one-to-one meeting at your place is not possible until your government takes necessary steps to create a democratic atmosphere by ending political and economic victimisation of the opposition," Bhutto said in a letter to Sharif.

Sharif wrote to Bhutto on Thursday inviting her to a working dinner, saying he was ready to discuss most of a list of 10 proposals presented by the opposition leader in a letter to him last Sunday.

In today's letter she repeated her proposals and said she could agree on nothing less than a three-point agenda of a national government, constitutional reforms to slash the power of the President to dismiss parliament, and fresh elections.

She is demanding Sharif halt victimisation in the form of a government-instigated court inquiry into allegations of corruption and abuse of power by Bhutto and members of her cabinet while she was Prime Minister from 1988 to 1990.

However, she did not rule

out a meeting on her terms.

"We have never closed the door on a one-to-one meeting should you wish it at my place provided it is meaningful," she wrote.

Bhutto followed up last Sunday's letter with a four-day ultimatum to Sharif to announce elections or face a protest march by tens of thousands of supporters to Islamabad to throw him out. She was due to announce a date for the march later today.

Western diplomats warned this week that the intransigence of her demands, and Sharif's dogged refusal to give in to them, were setting Pakistan on a path toward political chaos.

Another report says, Saudi Arabia is trying to mediate between Pakistan's President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to end their paralysing six-month-old struggle for power, an official source said today.

Saudi intelligence chief Prince Turki al-Faisal arrived in Pakistan on Thursday and has since held lengthy meetings with Ishaq Khan and Sharif asking them to end their confrontation, said the government official who declined to be named.

The President and Prime Minister are due to meet this evening as a result of hectic mediation by Al-Faisal and several local religious groups, the source said.



Munir to be hanged on July 26

Star Report

The Dhaka Central Jail authorities have fixed July 26 as the date for hanging Munir Hossain alias Suruj, convicted of murdering his wife Sharmin Sultana Rima, official sources said Saturday.

Munir, now in a condemned cell, will be sent to the gallows at dawn on that date, an official of the Dhaka Deputy Commissioner's office told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.

Munir has not yet been conveyed the date, the official said, adding that it was fixed by the jail authorities after Munir's mercy prayers were rejected by the President.

The authorities had reportedly fixed July 15 for the execution after the Supreme Court rejected Munir's review petition on June 20 but the date had to be postponed when Munir himself and his parents appealed for mercy to the President under

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Price of progress!

SIRAJGANJ, July 10: Thirty-five women of Badekusha village in Ullapara thana of the district have recently been declared outcasts for adopting family planning measures and taking loans from the Grameen Bank, reports UNB.

According to local people, Maulana Akbar Ali, the Imam of a mosque of the village, the village elders Abdus Sobhan and Abu Bakar Pramanik gave the decision against the women for under-going litigation and taking loans from the bank.

The women were reportedly passing hard days following the boycott.

Meanwhile, the Thana Nirbahi Officer (TNO) has ordered an investigation into the matter after the women, in a written petition, urged him to intervene in the matter.

Bangladesh 12th from bottom on WB list

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh has been ranked 12th from the bottom among 127 countries in a World Bank report released worldwide last week.

The ranking was made on the basis of the countries' gross national product (GNP) in the World Development Report-1993, where Bangladesh's per capita income is shown as 220 US dollars.

Switzerland tops the list of 127 countries with a 33,610 dollar per capita income, while Mozambique is at the bottom with only an 80-dollar per capita income.

Bangladesh's ranking, however, would be slightly higher if it is compared with another table of 73 countries having populations of less than one million.

Cambodia, a country with a 200 dollar per capita, was also included in that table.

In the main table of 127 countries, Bhutan is placed 5th and Nepal 7th from the bottom with each having a per capita income of 180 dollars.

The report said Bangladesh has a 110.6 million population with an average annual growth rate of 1.9 per cent between 1980 and 1991.

The average annual inflation in Bangladesh was 20.8 per cent during the decade 1970-80 which dropped to 9.3 per cent between 1980 and 1990, the report said.

It said that life expectancy at birth for every Bangladeshi was now 51 years. The current adult illiteracy is 65 per cent.

The report, in its population growth and projection, said that the country's current average annual population growth is 2.2 per cent which was 2.7 in 1970-80. It projected that the growth

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Dhaka will send troops to Bosnia

Bangladesh has taken a decision to send troops to help Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina defend themselves against aggressions by the Serbs and the Croats.

"The troops will be sent within the frame work of the OIC under the UN umbrella," Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman told UNB yesterday prior to his departure for Islamabad to attend a special ministerial meeting of the OIC beginning tomorrow (Monday).

The two-day meeting is expected to adopt resolutions on taking important measures including military actions to support the Bosnian Muslims against the aggressions.

Mostafizur will lead a four-member Bangladesh delegation to Islamabad meeting which will be participated by 15 Islamic countries.

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Moscow's missile tech sale

Clinton-Yeltsin talks fail to ease strains

TOKYO, July 10: President Bill Clinton hailed the "remarkable partnership" between the United States and Russia but said his meeting today with Boris Yeltsin had failed to ease strains over missile technology sales, reports AFP.

Clinton told a joint press conference with the Russian President that he had accepted an invitation to visit Moscow sometime this year but did not announce a firm date.

"I think we have forged a remarkable partnership," Clinton said, a sentiment echoed by Yeltsin who added that their "friendship was strengthening day by day."

But during their meeting the leaders failed to make headway

on the latest problem in their relations — Russia's decision to sell missile technology to Libya and India — although there was broad agreement on removing nuclear weapons from Ukraine and North Korea.

The missile dispute, which has already led to the cancellation of a visit to Washington by Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin planned for June, stems from US fears of weapons proliferation.

Russia, which urgently needs the foreign currency earned from technology sales, has so far resisted US efforts to quash the deals.

Officials would "continue the negotiations intensively and

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G-7 should have taken 'firmer' stand against Serbs: OIC

JEDDAH, July 10: The Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) today said the Group of Seven should have taken a 'firmer' stand against Serbs in the Bosnian conflict, reports AFP.

The G-7 statement "includes positive aspects but we would have liked it better if it had been firmer with the Serbian aggressor," OIC Secretary General Hamed Algabidi said.

He underlined the 'need to take practical measures in a bid to implement international resolutions on Bosnia-Herzegovina.'

Otherwise, Algabidi warned, 'this conflict threatens to have serious repercussions in the Balkans.'

JS body, PCJSS talk Chakmas' return July 14

The parliamentary committee on CHT and the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) will meet at Khagachhari on July 14 in a bid to start the stalled repatriation of Chakma refugees, official sources said today, reports UNB.

Communications Minister Oli Ahmed, chief of the committee of MPs, will lead his team at the talks while a delegation from the Janasanghati Samity, the political platform of the outlawed Shantibahini, will be headed by Jyotindra Larma alias Shantu.

Their last meeting was held at the same venue in May which decided to begin on June 8 the long-awaited repatriation of Bangladeshi refugees from the Chittagong Hill Tracts who are languishing in camps in the Indian state of Tripura.

Hasina visits Bangabandhu School in London

By Staff Correspondent

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina Friday visited the Bangabandhu Primary School in Tower Hamlets, London, at the invitation of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

The Bangabandhu School, set up in memory of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by the Tower Hamlets local administration, is the only educational institution in that area with modern facilities, according to an AL press release.

Hasina was received by Mayor Councillor of the bur-

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'Political commitment needed to check outbreak of AIDS'

Director of World Health Organisation (WHO) for global programme on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) Dr Michael H Merson yesterday called for "top political commitment" to prevent the outbreak of AIDS in Bangladesh, reports BSS.

He also suggested for a comprehensive national action plan with multisectoral approach and involvement of a different sections of the people to fight against the disease.

Dr Merson arrived yesterday on a four-day visit to Bangladesh as a part of his advocacy and sensitization mission and to review the country programme on AIDS.

Addressing the members of National AIDS Committee (NAC) and the women sub-committee members of NAC at Parliament Bhaban the WHO Director said AIDS was primarily a sexual disease which was preventable. He said necessary efforts should be taken to educate the people to prevent AIDS.

Chairman of NAC and Deputy Leader of the House Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury presided over the meeting.

Dr Merson said like any other sexually transmitted disease AIDS is easily transmitted through sexual intercourse and it can be prevented through "disciplined and safe sexual behaviour."

The WHO Director said he was critically concerned about Bangladesh since it was surrounded by high risk areas of AIDS in Thailand, Myanmar and the north-eastern part of India.

Making a global overview he said it was too late when the people in the AIDS infected countries including Thailand and some parts of India realised the danger and came into action to prevent it. He hoped that still there was time for the countries like Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia and China to act with all the force and save the population from any

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Golam Azam's detention extended

The detention of Prof Golam Azam was further extended by another two months. This is for the fifth time that his detention has been extended, reports BSS.

Prof Azam, arrested on March 24, 1992 under the Foreigner's Act following a government decision not to restore his citizenship, was given detention for 90 days.

The decision on the extension of Prof Azam's detention for another two months was taken here yesterday by a three-member advisory board comprising Justice D M Ansarudin Ahmed, Justice Mohammad Ansar Ali and Abdul-Hamid Chowdhury, Additional Secretary, Cabinet.

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BIDS board meets tomorrow

Crisis deepens

By Nurul Kabir

The crisis in the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) over the appointment of a new director general is likely to deepen with the government still reluctant to rescind its decision and the BIDS staff members determined to continue their work stoppage in protest against the appointment.

The stalemate began on May 22 with Planning Minister Zahiruddin Khan, ex-officio chairman of the 14 member board of trustees of the BIDS, naming Dr Latifur Reza as the new DG. Dr Reza is a Professor of Economics of the Dhaka University.

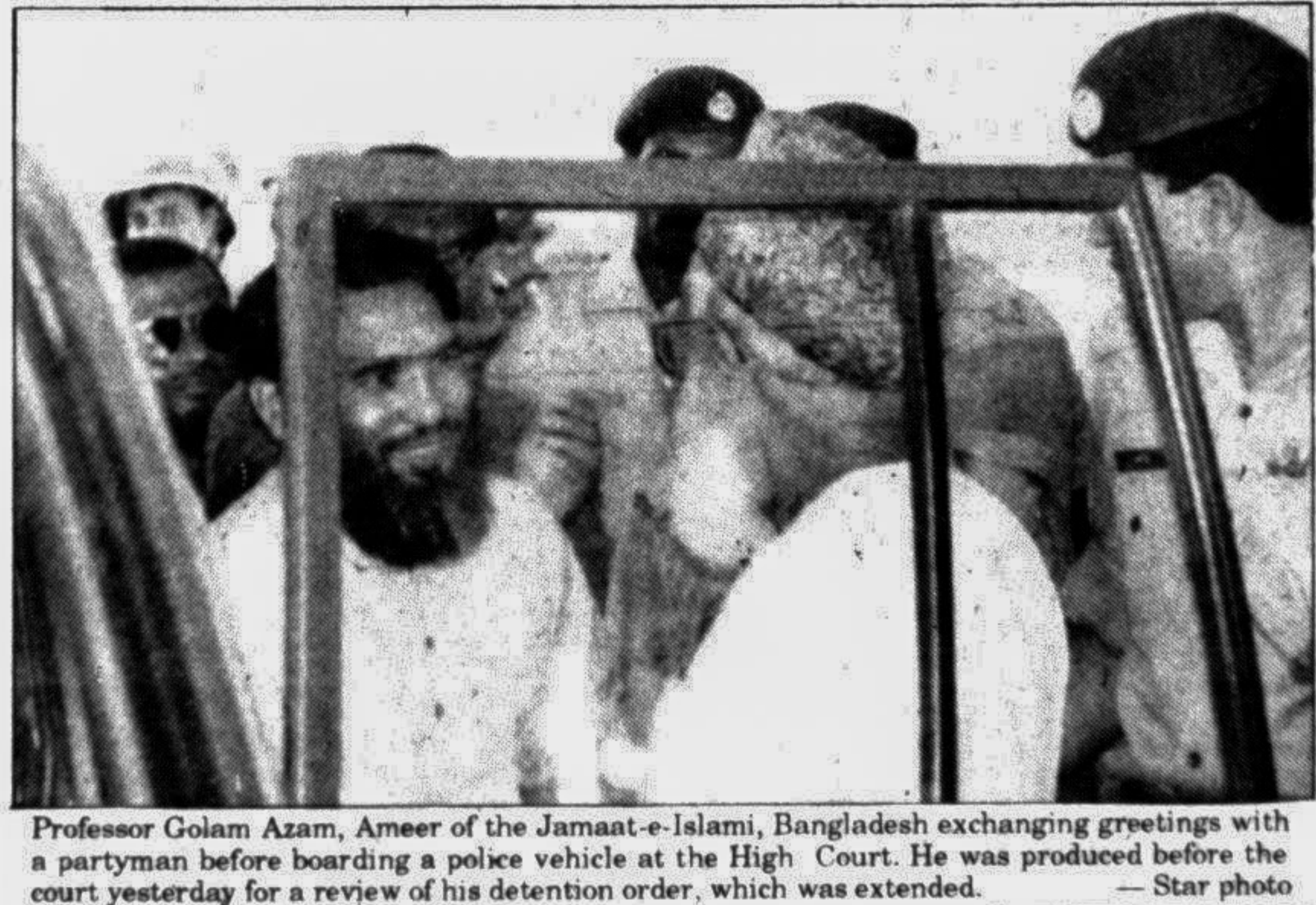
According to the charter of the BIDS — a statutory body — the board of trustees is the appointing authority of the institution.

Planning Minister Zahiruddin Khan told The Daily Star last night that there was no scope for changing the appointment of Latifur Reza as the DG.

"Dr Reza enjoys confidence of the majority members of the board of trustees, the legal appointing authority," the minister added.

He also observed that since the government does not dictate the research approach of the

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Professor Golam Azam, Ameer of the Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh exchanging greetings with a partyman before boarding a police vehicle at the High Court. He was produced before the court yesterday for a review of his detention order, which was extended. — Star photo