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NEWS BRIEFS

Speaker returns today

Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali will return home today from London where he was under treatment. The Speaker went to London on August 1 for treatment and he was successfully operated upon, reports UNB.

268 more Rohingyas go home

COX'S BAZAR, Aug 28: The 77th batch comprising 268 more Rohingyas refugees of 67 families today voluntarily returned back to their homeland in Myanmar. With this, the number of the refugees returned back home stood at 34,600, reports UNB.

Jubadal publicity procession today

Bangladesh Jatiyatadabdi Jubadal, Dhaka city committee will bring out a publicity procession from its Naya Paltan office today at 4 pm. Ministers, Dhaka City Corporation Mayor and leaders of the BNP and the Juba Dal will participate in the procession, reports BSS.

380 more BRTC officials retire

Another 380 officers, employees and workers of the Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation had taken voluntary retirement under voluntary retirement programme, according to a BRTC press release here last night. With these retirement the voluntary retirement from the BRTC stood at 1157. Out of them, 52 were officers, 128 employees and 977 workers, reports BSS.

Fax in Barisal

BARISAL, Aug 28: Telephone and Telegraph Department will introduce fax service here tomorrow and in Patuakhali on Monday, reports UNB.

40 killed in Afghan road accident

ISLAMABAD, Aug 28: Forty people were killed in a bus crash today in Afghanistan's northern province of Badakhshan, the official Kabul Radio said, reports Reuters.

Candidates must clear outstanding bank loans Top Pak politicians face election ban

ISLAMABAD, Aug 28: Pakistan's top politicians, owing loans worth billion of dollars, have been threatened with an election ban after the interim government amended electoral rules and declared defaulters ineligible, officials said today, reports AFP.

The government has authorised the Pakistan Banking Council (PBC) to publish the names of all those against whom bank loans worth Rupees one million (about 33,300 dollars) or more were outstanding.

The lists, released simultaneously by various banks, include the names of former premier Benazir Bhutto, her mother and co-chairperson of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Nusrat Bhutto. Benazir and Nusrat are

listed in connection with a one-million-rupee loan to Mussawat, the newspaper of their Pakistan People's Party.

But banking sources said Benazir, one of the two main contenders for Prime Minister, would escape the election ban as she held a share of less than 51 per cent in the newspaper.

Her husband, former Member of Parliament Asif Ali Zardari, is named as a director in a company which defaulted on a loan in 1985 and now owes 7.2 million rupees (240,000 dollar).

In addition to other senior PPP leaders, some of Bhutto's in-laws have been declared defaulters on various counts.

Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's brother, Shahbaz Sharif, his former interior

Minister Chaudhury Shujaat Hussain, former Food Minister Majid Malik, Foreign Minister Siddique Kanju and several provincial ministers have to repay millions of dollars, the PBC release said.

Shahbaz Sharif's name, banking sources said, would be removed from a revised list as he recently repaid his debts.

The defaulters also included Gohar Ayub Khan, Speaker of the dissolved National Assembly, and some close relatives, including sons-in-law, of former President Ghulam Ishaq Khan.

Besides politicians, the lists name senior officers of the country's armed forces and tribal chieftains.

A PBC statement said that while every effort had been made to verify the names, the

possibility of errors or omissions cannot be ruled out.

However, names of borrowers who produce satisfactory evidence of adjusting their overdues would be deemed to have been deleted.

Sources said Nawaz Sharif's Ittefaq Foundries owed some 2.5 million dollars, but the loan was repaid in June this year and his name has been deleted from the defaulters' list.

Banking sources said the amount due from defaulters could be as high as 95 billion rupees (3.2 billion dollars) — the same as Pakistan's huge budget deficit.

A decree issued by acting President Wasim Sajjad late Friday said the candidates contesting October polls must re-

Dr Kamal likely to float party today

Star Report

A new political party headed by Dr Kamal Hossain is likely to be announced today at the end of the three-day National Grand Convention (NGC).

The convention, sponsored by Dr Kamal Hossain and his allies, began at the Institute of Engineers Friday morning.

During the day-long discussions in the plenary session yesterday, almost all the speakers spoke in favour of launching the party from the convention, said an organiser of the NGC.

The proposal to form a political organisation, which has already been endorsed at a mini-convention held August 12-14, will be formally placed before the delegates today for approval.

The new party will merge the CPB (reformists), the NAP led by Pankaj Bhattacharya, the JSD (Siraj), Gano Azadi League and the dissident group of Awami League led by Kamal himself.

Dr Kamal end other policy-

makers met last night to finalise an interim constitution and central leadership of the party. The meeting was continuing till writing of this report.

Sources said suggested names for the party include 'United Democratic Party', 'Jatiya Oikya Party', 'Jatiya Oikya Forum and Jatiya Ganadal'.

The central leadership of the party will be formed as a 101-member organising committee, which is most likely to include a council of chairmen and a secretariat.

Dr Kamal, who will be the chairman of the party, may also act as chief executive or head of the secretariat for an interim period.

Sources said the party planners have been trying to evolve a collective leadership mechanism since there is a number aspirants for the post of general secretary.

In addition to Barrister Sec Page 12 Col 6

AL denounces DCC decision

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh Awami League (AL) yesterday expressed deep resentment at the Dhaka City Corporation's decision to charge fees for holding public meetings and gatherings on the city streets.

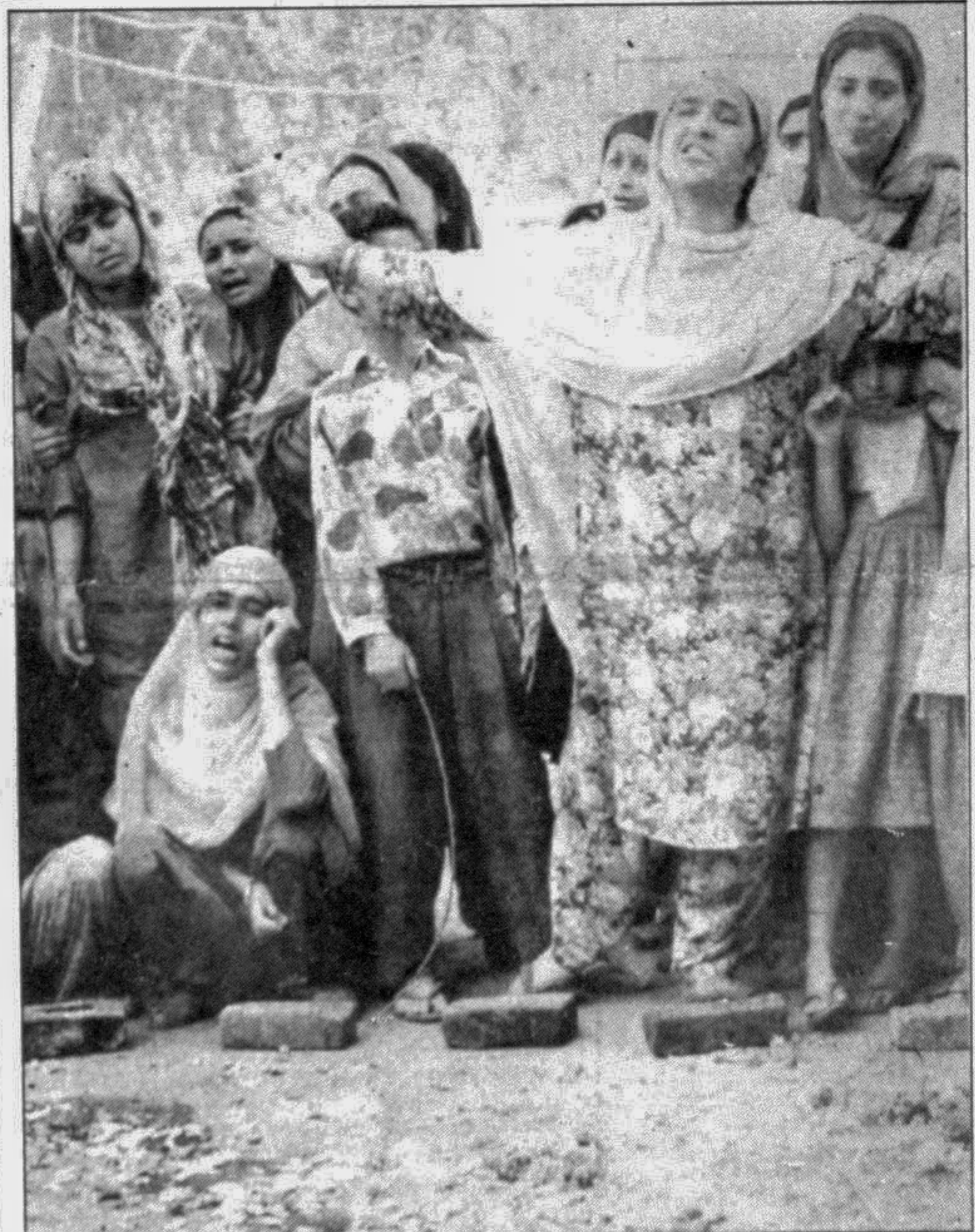
At a party presidium at 29 Minto Road, presided over by AL chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina, the party termed the decision as "undemocratic" and said it was against the "basic constitutional right to hold public gatherings."

The AL demanded immediate withdrawal of the decision.

The presidium members also protested corruption in different departments of the government and political repression. They urged the government to withdraw false cases against the AL activists.

The meeting was also attended by the members of the advisory board.

A party press release said the meeting also discussed the agenda of the party's working committee meeting scheduled for September 1.



Women weeping for a dead militant at the spot where he was killed by the Indian security forces Thursday in northern Kashmir. Flowers thrown by the grieving women are scattered upon the blood-strewn pavement. — AFP photo

US considering Rao's visit, says Dixit

WASHINGTON, Aug 28: The Clinton administration has 'generally informed' India's Foreign Secretary, J N Dixit, that it is considering a visit by Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, to the United States, "Sometime during the fall or early next year," reports PTI.

On his two days of talks with the State Department, National Security Council and Pentagon Officials, Dixit expressed great satisfaction and indicated that one result of his visit would be an examination by the US authorities of legal obstacles that stand in the way of greater technology transfers to India.

In eight weeks time there is also likely to be a technical level discussion on non-proliferation, how it should be structured, bilaterally by interaction between the US and India, by regional discussions depending on how the region is defined and so on. "These are matters under active discussion," Dixit told a press conference at the Indian chancery.

For the first time Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Nepalese correspondents were permitted to attend such a press conference under the auspices of the New

Sec Page 12 Col 7

'BNP council to have impact on politics'

By Staff Correspondent

With just three days to go for the national council, chairperson of the ruling BNP Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia last night reviewed the overall preparations at a meeting with her senior party colleagues.

Party sources said Begum Zia was satisfied with the progress and final plans for the two-day council beginning Sept 1.

Meanwhile, party Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukder said yesterday that the objectives of the fourth council are to take up political, economic and organisational programmes on

the basis of the existing realities.

"The council will come up with specific guidelines for the country's overall development and future policies," he told a group of reporters at the party office.

"It will also have an impact on the country's politics," he added.

Replying to a question, he said he will consider continuing in his present party post if the party entrusts him with the responsibility.

Talukder, who has a heart condition, said that after extensive treatment in the United States he is feeling better but he is following his doctor's advice to go to bed early.

Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah and Telecommunications Minister Tariqul Islam, who are also considered front-runners for Talukder's post, told newsmen that they would honour the decision of the chairperson and strive to implement the ideology of the BNP and the ideals of late President Ziaur Rahman.

"Our achievements is that

Foreign invitees due from today

By Staff Correspondent

Foreign dignitaries will start arriving from today to attend the two-day fourth National Council of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) on September 1-2, party sources said.

A former French parliamentarian will be the first to arrive, the source said on condition of

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2 ministers try to unite Ctg BNP

CHITTAGONG, Aug 28: To resolve the longstanding conflict and dissension in the Chittagong unit of BNP, two ministers began a close-door meeting with the rival groups tonight amidst tight security, reports UNB.

The BNP high command entrusted Forest and Environment Minister Abdullah al Noman and Planning Minister M Zahiruddin Khan with resolving the conflict in Chittagong BNP for striking a unanimous decision on election of councillors for the party's national council.

Economy on right track: IMF

The visiting International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission led by IMF Senior Adviser Bruce J Smith yesterday highly acclaimed the macroeconomic stability and economic success of Bangladesh under the government of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, reports BSS.

"The economy is now on the right track. The monetary situation is excellent. The price

Special drive against food adulteration

An inter-ministerial meeting yesterday decided to undertake all-out special drives against adulteration of food items like edible oil, milk and milk products, medicine, soft and mineral drinks and adoption of tricky devices in weighing, reports BSS.

The meeting presided over by Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury expressed concern

Ong elected Singapore president

SINGAPORE, Aug 28: Singapore's former Deputy Prime Minister Ong Teng Cheong has been elected the republic's first president with executive powers, election officials announced today, reports AFP.

Ong, 57, received 952,513 votes while the only other candidate, former civil servant Chua Kim Yoow, who was persuaded by the government to run to give Singaporeans a choice, received 670,358 votes.

Ensure congenial environment for grooming talents: PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday said there is no alternative to talent and knowledge for building a developed society and called for ensuring a congenial environment for grooming talents, reports UNB.

"The talented and wise are the country's biggest resource... We have to properly groom and nourish the talents for achieving prosperity," she said.

Begum Zia was addressing a reception accorded to the meritorious students of the talent pool of the 1993 Secondary School Certificate Examinations

under the country's four education boards and the Dakhil Examinations of the Madrassah Education Board.

The Prime Minister emphasised the need for utilisation of knowledge and genius in the practical need of daily life.

"Education does not mean only passing examinations and obtaining certificates. We have to link education with life and society," she said.

She stressed the importance of vocational, practical and technical education for transforming the country's huge population into an efficient

workforce. "We have to make education production-oriented."

Recalling the talents who had earlier done the country proud in various international fields, Begum Zia asked the young prodigies to revive the lost glory.

"You have to bring smiles on the faces of the peasants, workers and the have-nots. Only then the country will attain prosperity and development and your talent, labour and perseverance will be successful," she said.

Focusing on the aims and

Accord on Palestinian self-rule imminent?

JERUSALEM, Aug 28: Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres has flown to California to brief US Secretary of State Warren Christopher on a new proposal for Palestinian self-rule in the occupied territories, Israel Radio said, reports Reuters.

The visit, which was cloaked in secrecy and not confirmed by officials, could be another sign that a self-rule agreement between Israel and the Palestinians is imminent.

The United States today had no comment on an Israeli Radio report that Peres had left Israel for a meeting in California with

Christopher.

A State Department spokesman would neither confirm nor deny the Israeli Radio report.

The radio said Peres had

through at the 11th round of Middle East peace talks, which starts in Washington on Tuesday.

In a newspaper interview published on Friday Peres said Israel and the Palestinians were closer than ever to agreement on a plan for interim self-rule starting in the occupied Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho.

Palestine Liberation Organisation leader Yasser Arafat, who has been chairing a PLO executive committee meeting in Tunis to discuss the peace talks, has also said the Washington talks would produce a self-government accord.

Speaking in an interview with Radio France International, Arafat said he had personally proposed a draft agreement under which Israel would withdraw from Gaza and Jericho.

Police Minister Moshe Shahal said on Saturday that

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