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NEWS BRIEFS

OIC Secy Gen arrives today

OIC Secretary General Dr Hamid Al Ghabid has scheduled to arrive here this evening to attend the seventh congregation ceremony at the Islamic Centre for Technical and Vocational Training and Research (ICTVTR), Gazipur. The OIC Secretary General during his stay in Dhaka is scheduled to call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, reports BSS.

302 punished under Anti-Terrorism Act

Some 302 people were punished, five of them with life term, on charges of murder and hijacking under the Anti-Terrorism Act in last one year. Two hundred and ninety-seven criminals were given jail sentences for different terms in final verdicts in 140 cases during the period from September 15, 1992 to September 7, 1993, reports UNB.

BCS exam test Oct 15

Preliminary test of the 15th BCS examination 1993-94 will be held in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna centres on October 15. Bangladesh Public Service Commission Secretariat has informed that the admit cards have already been sent to the candidates by post, reports UNB.

Varsity closed *sine die*, all provosts resign One killed, 40 injured as Shibir activists swoop on 4 RU halls

RAJSHAHI, Sept 19: A student was killed and 40 others were injured, 13 seriously, in one of the worst incidents of violence at the trouble-torn Rajshahi University early today, reports UNB.

The dead was identified as Zubayer Chowdhury Rimu, 22, a second year honours student of Management and son of Satkhira Govt College teacher Abu Matlebur Rahman.

Authorities declared the university closed *sine die* and ordered all residents to vacate their dormitories by 3 this afternoon.

The RU Syndicate took the

decision in an emergency meeting following the pre-dawn clashes in which scores of rooms of the residential halls were ransacked and torched, allegedly by pro-Jamaat Islami Chhatra Shibir activists. The official residence of the Vice-Chancellor and the Proctor's office were also ransacked later by the protesters.

Meanwhile, all the provosts of the 13 residential halls resigned en masse following the violence and misbehaviour by some students.

Campus sources said trouble erupted when some 500 activists of the Chhatra Shibir,

backed by outsiders, attacked four halls with firearms and lethal weapons at about 3 am.

The attackers ransacked 51 rooms and set on fire 28 others in those halls. They fired 10 gunshots and exploded about 40 home-made bombs during the rampage that lasted more than one and a half hours.

The Shibir activists first swooped on the Sher-e-Bangla Hall and ransacked 11 rooms and set fire to four others.

Then they marched to the Shaheed Suhrawardy Hall and stormed into the dormitory. Seventeen rooms of the hall were damaged and six others

set ablaze. Afterwards, they attacked the Madar Bux Hall and destroyed 16 rooms and set ablaze 10 others. Lastly, they attacked the Habibur Rahman Hall where they damaged seven and set fire to eight other rooms.

In protest against the 'heinous Shibir attack', the general students and activists of different student organisations, including the ruling BNP-backed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and the Chhatra Moltree, brought out a combined procession at 5 am and ransacked the official residence of the

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A Dhaka-bound passenger-bus from Narsingdi fell into a roadside ditch yesterday, killing four passengers. — Star photo

Review of Financial Sector Reform Project Macro-stability yet to be reflected upon economy

Star Report

Belying repeated government claims of having achieved macro-economic stability, a recent review of the Financial Sector Reform Project found that it had 'no clear impact on the country's macro-economic performance.'

'The major conclusion that can be drawn... is that the reform programme is in (its) very early days and there is no clear impact on either the financial system itself or the macro-economic performance,' concluded the Review of the Financial Sector Reform Project (FSRP). Bangladesh Bank initiated the project in 1989.

Jointly undertaken by Forrest Cookson, an FSRP advisor, and Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir, Chairman of the Tariff Commission, the review notes that the reform programme has not been able to accelerate the growth rate to the desired level and improve the quality of investments.

'The reform programme's objective of improving the quality of new investments has

not yet been achieved,' the review observed. 'It will take several years for the reform programme to influence significantly the quality of new investments to the point where the growth rate increases.'

In a report presented last week at an Asian Development Bank sponsored conference on the Bangladesh economy the authors, in their personal capacity, also said that the FSRP was unable to develop an active monetary policy and to counter the high real interest rates.

The reasons for the high interest rates, resulting in a sluggish economy, were identified as the huge burden of debt, which was underestimated earlier, faulty market organisation of the banks and the failure of the nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) to improve their performance.

The rapid drop in the inflation rate also contributed to the high interest rates, the report said while noting that the amount of bad loans may be in the order of Taka 6000-8000

crore, although there are no reliable estimates of the total bad debts in the banking system.

'The macro-economic performance is influenced by the greater caution of the banking sector in keeping very high interest rates.'

The 'full' clean-up of the loan portfolios of the four state-owned NCBs would require further recapitalisation, in addition to the Taka 1,700 crore already infused, the report said.

Noting that the NCBs failed to show any improvements as expected and continue to experience rising levels of bad debt and operating losses, the report cautioned against continuing the recapitalisation process.

Saying that recapitalisation, 'rewards bad performance', the report added 'the repeated recapitalisation of the NCBs, apparently part of the reform programme conditionalities, creates a dangerous precedent as it relieves pres-

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4 killed in bus plunge

At least four people were killed and 45 injured when a bus skidded off the Dhaka-Narsingdi highway and plunged into a roadside ditch yesterday, reports UNB.

Fire Brigade sources said the vehicle rammed a roadside tree and then tumbled into the ditch at Karnagoon in Rupganj thana at about 12:00 noon.

Local people rushed into rescue and recovered a body from the sunken bus and sent the body to Dhaka.

Later, firemen recovered three other dead, two of them women, from inside the bus. Among the dead, one was identified as Nur Mohammad, 45, of Sattaria in Manikganj thana.

The injured were sent to various medicare centres including the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where nine people were admitted. A number of injured were released from DMCH after giving first aid.

The bodies were handed over to the Rupganj police.

In the city, a pedestrian, Ruhul Amin, 26, died on the spot when a speeding bus ran over him at Bolta Bazar, Uttara yesterday noon.

BSS adds: Three other people including a mother and her daughter were killed when a Lalmonirhat-bound bus from

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Attack on Ajker Kagoj Matin hopes to unveil 'mystery'

By Staff Correspondent

Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury yesterday informed the Jatiya Sangsad that there is a mystery behind last Friday's attack on the daily Ajker Kagoj newspaper office.

'Two separate cases have been lodged — one by newspaper authorities and another by an individual — after the incident and the matter is to be investigated,' Chowdhury said while taking part in an unscheduled debate on the incident.

'I will not make any comment now since the matter is under investigation and I think the mystery will be unveiled soon,' the minister said. In the

course of his statement on the matter Matin Chowdhury also referred to the situation at the Daily Ittefaq where, he said, there is rivalry and discord among the owners which has given rise to some untoward incidents in the past.

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Awami League MP Tofael Ahmed, rising on a point of order after the break for Maghrib prayers, initiated the debate demanding a full-scale debate on the issue.

Tofael alleged that hoodlums belonging to the Jamaat-Shibir attacked the Ajker Kagoj office,

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Govt by-passing JS, opposition MPs say

By Staff Correspondent

Opposition lawmakers yesterday severely criticised the government for its frequent promulgation of ordinances. They felt that 'unnecessary' promulgation of ordinances virtually amounted to by-passing the Jatiya Sangsad (JS).

Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz, however, rejected the allegation arguing that Article 93 of the Constitution empowered the President to promulgate any ordinance at any time provided the JS was not in session.

The Opposition legislators made their points when they were defending a resolution seeking disapproval of the Supreme Court Judges (Leave, Pension and Privileges) (Amendment) Ordinance, 1993 on the floor yesterday.

The Opposition members observed that the President was empowered to promulgate an ordinance only in case of an

emergency regarding any legislative issue. The Opposition MPs found no urgency behind promulgation of the ordinance relating to the increase of pension of the judges of the Supreme Court, especially only 17 days before the JS was summoned.

The proposed legislation could well have been placed in the House in the form of a bill, the Opposition MPs told the chair, adding that this did so happen only because the government had developed a tendency to by-pass Parliament.

The Law Minister, on the other hand, argued that it was the President — nobody else — who is supposed to be satisfied with the circumstances for promulgating an ordinance.

'President Abdul Rahman Biswas was satisfied about the circumstances' for promulgating the ordinance and we had

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'More local investments can encourage foreign investors'

By Staff Correspondent

Economists, bankers and businessmen at a seminar yesterday said if the government can increase local investments by undertaking appropriate measures, the foreign investors would be attracted automatically.

The speakers felt that the only reason why the foreign investors were not responding satisfactorily to the government's offer of lucrative incentives was the low profile of local investments.

Bangladesh Bank Governor Khorshed Alam inaugurated the seminar on 'Foreign Private Investment in Bangladesh' organised by the Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM).

Khorshed Alam said the present macro-economic situation of the country was highly conducive to faster growth involving more and more investment.

Financial sector reform and liberalised foreign exchange system were the positive inducements for foreign direct investments to flow in, he said and added that the country had also comparative advantages in many sectors. Joint ventures or 100 per cent-owned projects of the foreign investors should now be forthcoming, he said.

The Governor expressed optimism about an immediate large-scale inflow of foreign investment and informed the seminar that 63 joint venture and 100 per cent foreign investment projects were registered with the Board of Investment (BOI) of which 35 projects had already started production.

Emphasising the need for foreign investment, Khorshed Alam said the savings-investment gap in the country presently was 6-7 per cent even at the low investment rate on GDP at 10 per cent. To meet the resource gap, the country had to borrow heavily from external sources, he said, adding that in such a situation substantial amount of foreign investment would augment domestic capital and offer a viable alternative to external borrowing.

The BB Governor also said that foreign investment would help expedite the process of technology transfer.

A H M Nurul Islam Chowdhury, Director General and Sujit R Saha, Faculty Member of the BIBM, in a written paper, said it had been a common feature that many approved investment proposals involving foreign investment were not implemented.

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World economy shows recovery Growth stronger in Asian developing states: IMF

By Staff Correspondent

The world economy showed a slight recovery in 1992 with an overall growth of 1.75 per cent compared with an increase of half of one per cent in 1991, the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) 1993 annual report said.

The report was released here yesterday at the Bangladesh Bank conference room by the Fund's officials.

The IMF report disclosed that the developing countries in Asia and the Middle East as well as those in the Western hemisphere displayed a stronger growth, which helped fuel a six per cent increase in real GDP for the group of developing countries as a whole.

The IMF observed 'Although, overall global economic activity recovered slightly, this recovery

was below expectations and was characterised by a persistence of low or negative growth in most industrial countries.'

'Among developing countries, a number have seen an improvement in economic conditions as a result of determined adjustment efforts to promote growth and introduce far-reaching structural reforms, often with financial and technical support from the IMF,' the report said.

'Many others, however, still face difficult economic situations and must undertake major policy adjustments,' the IMF observed.

The report said inflation continued to decline throughout the world in 1992 as demand

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New York tour Khaleda unlikely to meet Rao

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is unlikely to meet Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao during her New York visit to attend the 48th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), reports UNB.

She will, however, meet her counterparts from Malaysia and Thailand to exchange views on bilateral, regional and international issues of common concern.

This was disclosed by Foreign Secretary Reza Rahman yesterday during his briefing of journalists in the conference room of the ministry yesterday about the Prime Minister's planned visit to New York.

The Prime Minister, who leaves Dhaka on September 29 for New York, will address the UNGA session on October 1, Rahman said.

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Repatriation of Chakmas: Indian team in CHT

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Sept 19: A 24-member delegation from Tripura state of India arrived today in the Khagrachhari hill district headquarters on a three day visit to see if the conditions in the CHT districts are favourable for the repatriation of more than 50,000 Chakma refugees.

The delegation comprises seven Indian officials and 17 refugee leaders including the chairman of the Refugees Welfare Association Upendra Lal Chakma. The Indian officials included three women and the relief commissioner of Tripura state K Arya.

The delegation reached Khagrachhari district through Ramgarh outpost at around 11:30 am. They were received by the reception committee members including MPs and administration officials.

The delegation is expected to return on September 21 after

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Hasina goes to Singapore for medical check-up

Awami League president and leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday left for Singapore for medical check-up, reports UNB.

She will consult doctors at the National University Hospital in the city state, Awami League leader Amir Hossain Amu said.

Hasina, ailing for the last few days, is accompanied by her son, Joy, and aunt.

She was seen off at the airport by Abdus Samad Azad, Abdul Mannan, Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, Amir Hossain Amu, Tofael Ahmed, Abdur Razzak, Zillur Rahman, Mohammad Nasim, Begum Matia Chowdhury, Barrister K S Nabi, Obaidul Qader, Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Abul Hassan Chowdhury and a number of party MPs, leaders and workers of different front organisations.

Gano Forum suggests introduction of 'Zila government'

Staff Correspondent

The Gano Forum yesterday proposed introduction of 'Zila government' entrusted with specific powers in order to build an effective local government in the country.

The newly-floated party made its first public suggestion on the structure of government at a press conference held at its office premises in Segun Bagicha in the afternoon.

Acting president of the Forum Nurjahan Murshed was the key speaker at the press conference which was addressed, among others, by A M A Muhi, Shahjahan Siraj, MP, Shamsuddoha, MP, Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, Major Gen (ret'd) Khalilur Rahman, Ahmedur

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Sonargaon Hotel staff join duties

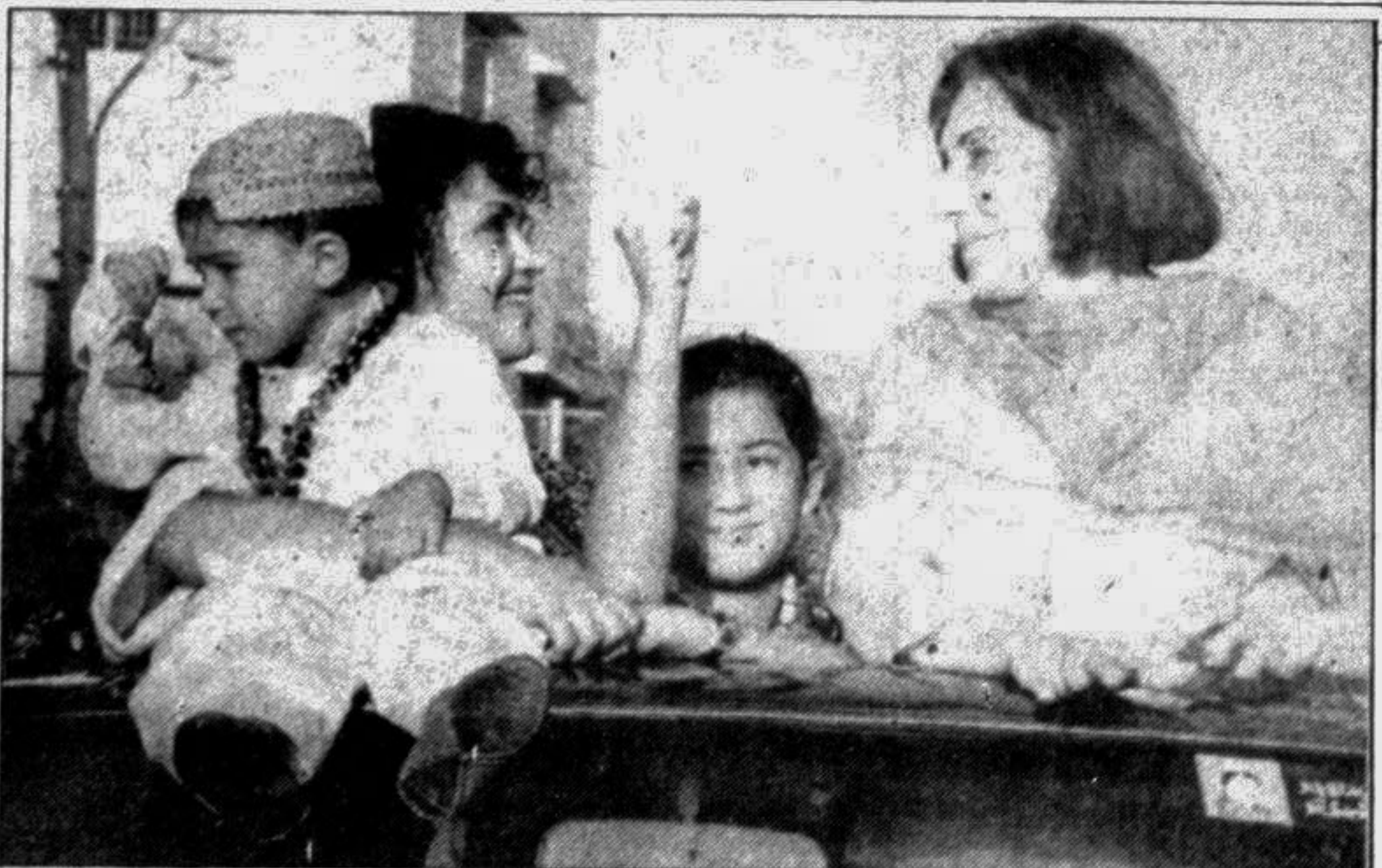
By Staff Correspondent

Some 400-odd staff of the Sonargaon Hotel joined their duties and freed the General Manager from his nine-and-a-half hour confinement late Saturday night following assurances by the authorities to consider their demands.

Union leaders of the hotel said they had put off their strike for two days following the assurance.

Workers and employees of the country's only five-star hotel

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Nusrat Bhutto (R), Co-chairperson of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), with the wife and children of her son Mir Murtaza Bhutto, leading the first election campaign rally of her son in Karachi Saturday. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Junior (left) and Fatima (2nd right) are making a fist sign, the election symbol of their father. — AFP photo