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NEWS BRIEFS

Biswas leaves for Barisal today

President Abdur Rahman Biswas begins a two-day visit to Barisal today. During the visit, President Biswas will inaugurate the electrification programme of the Barisal Palli Biddyt Samity-1 sponsored by the Rural Electrification Board, tomorrow, reports UNB.

Raphel calls on Hasina

The visiting US Assistant Secretary of State Robin Lynn Raphel called on Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina at her Parliament office yesterday. During the hour-long meeting, they exchanged views on political, economic and social conditions as well as matters of mutual interest between the two countries, reports UNB.

Jalaidah meets Mostafiz

The visiting Director General of the Makkah based Rabitat Al-Alam Al-Islami in Pakistan Sheikh Hamza Wali Jalaidah called on Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman at his office yesterday, reports UNB.

Hartals only to worsen situation

Opposition misleading people: PM

NATORE, Nov 4: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today voiced strongly against hartals and strikes and called upon the people to choose between the politics of development and of destruction, reports UNB.

"Hartals cannot solve national problems like poverty but will only worsen the situation," she told a huge rally at the Bagatipara Degree College ground in the district this afternoon.

"While on one side the politics of development is continuing, a vested quarter is calling unnecessary hartals on unjustified issues," she said.

She asked the people to keep vigil on them, saying the opposition political parties are engaged in orchestrating misinformation and misleading the people.

Those who are calling hartals are not causing any problem for the BNP but sufferings for the people, she said. "They cannot be friends of the people and do not want development of the country."

"BNP's work cannot be evaluated by hartals," she said, adding her government is going ahead with its election pledges. She mentioned the agricultural land tax waiver and withdrawal of certificate cases against poor farmers and said those had been done only for boosting production and development of the country.

"We have increased production of paddy and wheat, but it is not enough... We have to think about crop diversification," the Prime Minister told the people of the mainly sugar-growing area.

"Fruits of democracy will reach the people only when economic freedom is achieved," Begum Zia reiterated referring to the eagerness shown by many countries to invest in Bangladesh.

She, however, lamented that the vested quarters do not want that and are calling unnecessary hartals. They want to fulfil their own interest, she added and told the people to understand "whose purpose they (callers of hartal) are serving."

The Prime Minister said economy had improved in the last two and a half years because there had been development during the present government. Even foreign leaders are saying that there has been improvement in the economic sector, she added.

"BNP government wants to

ensure basic needs of the people," Begum Zia said calling for united efforts to consolidate democracy and carry its benefits to the people. "The world is developing fast and we have to keep pace with the forward march."

The Prime Minister called for private initiatives in setting up industries and assured all out support of her government. Small and cottage industries have to be set up in all villages to create self-employment and increase production, she added.

Begum Zia also mentioned different development programmes of her government but said population has to be kept under control for making government efforts successful.

Referring to local problems, she said rural electrification

Country's urban poor to reach 8.82m by '95

By Special Correspondent

The number of hard-core urban poor in Bangladesh, which is estimated at about seven million, is on the increase and likely to reach the mark of 8.82 million in 1995.

If the country's poverty situation does not improve, the number would go up further and stand at 11.19 million in the year 2000.

This was stated in the Urban and Shelter Sector Review Report in Bangladesh funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

According to the report, of the 23 million urban population in Bangladesh, more than 50 per cent are poor. About 30 per cent of urban people are considered hard-core poor who are on the border line of starvation.

These hard-core poor belong

to the families whose monthly household income is less than Taka 2600, considered adequate to at least meet the daily calorie requirement and pay for some other basic needs. There has been an overall decline in calorie intake, from 2310 in 1965, down to 2094 in 1975-76 and down again to 1943 in 1985-86.

In the urban areas, 44 per cent suffer from malnutrition and above seven per cent from acute malnutrition, says the review report.

According to experts, rising urban poverty should be one of the major concerns. They believe the rapid pace of urbanisation may lead to economic, social and physical problems that should be the major

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Trade ties with US to be strengthened

Bangladesh and the United States yesterday agreed to bolster cooperation between the two countries in all fields, particularly in trade and economy, reports UNB.

The agreement came during official-level talks between the two countries at the Foreign Office.

The visiting US Assistant Secretary of State Robin Lynn Raphel led the American side at the talks. She was assisted by the US Charge d'Affaires P Mach.

"We had wide-ranging talks covering bilateral, regional and international issues," said Foreign Secretary Rear Rahman who led the home side at the meeting.

He was assisted by additional foreign secretaries Moinuddin Ahmed and Khairul Anam.

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Repatriation of Biharis may begin in Dec

The repatriation of stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh is expected to begin next month as construction of 1000 houses for their rehabilitation under a pilot project has been completed in Punjab.

Project Director of Rabita Alam Trust Sheikh Wael Hamzah Jelaidan said this in an interview with BSS prior to his departure for Pakistan at the end of two-day visit to Dhaka.

He was optimistic of the repatriation of all the 41 thousand families of stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh. He replied in the affirmative when asked if the trust had adequate fund to meet the expenditures for repatriation of 1000 families beginning next month.

Jelaidan said Rabita leaders

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Asian artists' body soon

Artists and critics now attending the Sixth Asian Art Biennale in the city yesterday decided to form an organisation of the Asian artists.

The decision was taken following a two-day seminar on the impact of Globalisation on Asian Art Traditions that ended at the Shilpakala Academy auditorium yesterday.

During the seminar, reports on socio-economic, political and cultural conditions of the participating nations were presented.

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Dhaka elected IJO Executive Director

Bangladesh was yesterday elected the Executive Director of the Dhaka-based International Jute Organisation (IJO) for a three-year term, reports UNB.

Bangladesh's nominee K M Rabbani, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, secured 1581 out of 2000 votes against Netherlands' Erling Desau. India withdrew its candidature at the last month. The Indian nominee was R L Misra.

Five jute-exporting and 23 jute-importing countries are

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Chief mediator of Hazratbal crisis killed in accident

SRINAGAR, Nov 4: Wajahat Habibullah, Kashmir's Divisional Commissioner and chief official negotiator to the Hazratbal crisis died on the spot in a road accident here this morning, reports PTI.

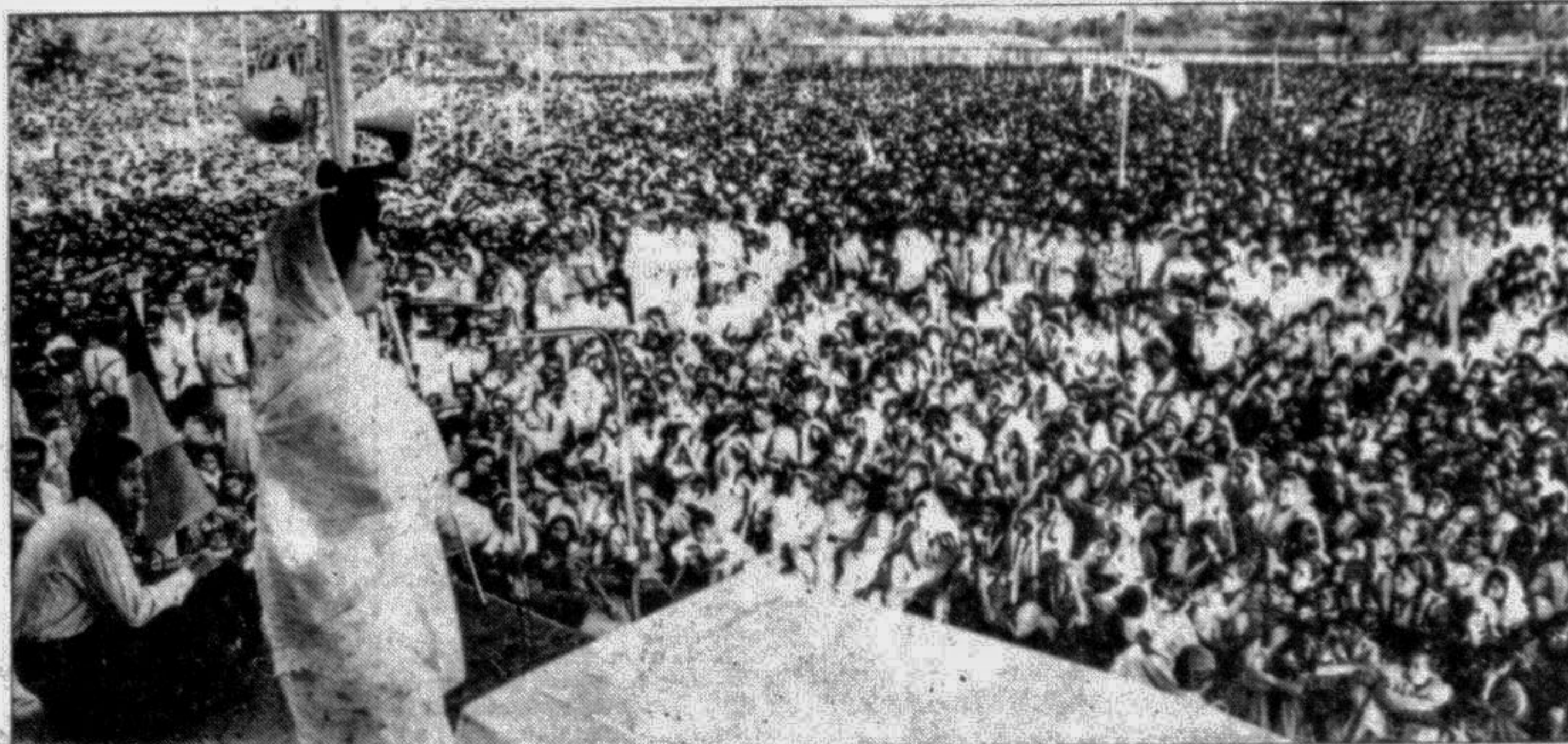
Lt Gen M A Zaki (Retd), Adviser to the State Governor, was also seriously injured when the bullet proof car in which the two were travelling collided with an army truck near a UN crossing at Sonwar around 11:30 hrs, officials sources said.

The fate of the car driver was not immediately known.

Habibullah and Zaki were rushed to A M Hospital located nearby. Both Habibullah and Zaki were on way to the Rajbaban to brief the governor about the latest situation at the Hazratbal shrine.

Gen Zaki headed the unified command of security forces while Habibullah was chief official negotiator of the government to resolve the 21-day-old Hazratbal crisis.

— AFP photo



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing a big public meeting at the Bagatipara Degree College premises in Natore yesterday. — PID photo

Insolvency laws to be amended

By S Y Bakht

A draft report to amend the country's existing insolvency acts, providing a broader definition and making it easier to start bankruptcy proceedings, has been finalised, according to official sources.

Initiated by the Finance Ministry, the proposed amendments would consolidate the rarely used Insolvency Act, Dhaka of 1909 and the Insolvency Act of 1920. The draft report containing the amendments is likely to be placed before the Jatiya Sangsad during the forthcoming winter session.

The proposed amendments would be strict on all debtors, including companies, provide for speedy liquidation of assets in bankruptcy proceedings, streamline court proceedings, make it difficult to obtain

bankruptcy discharge and would impose stiffer penalties for withholding information.

A national consultant, US bankruptcy lawyer James C Reagan, was engaged, under the World Bank-funded Financial Sector Reform Project, to prepare the proposed amendments in consultation with a national advisory committee set up for the purpose. Reagan submitted the final report on the proposed amendments to the Finance Ministry on August 22 last.

The national advisory committee was chaired by Dr Kamal Hossain and included Justice K M Sobhan, Justice Abdur Rahman Chowdhury, Barrister Syed Ishaque Ahmed, Professor Ershadul Bari, Deputy Governor of Bangladesh Bank Shah Abdul Hannan, senior

government officials and representatives of banks, among others.

Modelled after the bankruptcy law of Singapore, the proposed amendments would make it difficult for debtors to escape payments of their debts, the sources said.

It would also include provisions similar to the US Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceedings, in which a company is allowed to shed-off debts, reorganise and make itself economically viable, rather than be liquidated, under supervision. Companies would also be included as debtors under the new law, so that they are forced to reorganise under the provisions, the sources added.

The proposed amendments would facilitate creditors to in-

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Mostafiz discusses garments quota issue with Raphel

Increase in all garments quota was discussed in a meeting yesterday between the visiting US Assistant Secretary of State, Robin Lynn Raphel, and Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman, reports UNB.

America is the main buyer of Bangladesh ready-made garments which, manufacturers claim, fetch about 60 per cent of the country's export earning.

They also discussed return of the tribal refugees of the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the gradual repatriation of the Rohingyas, besides other matters of mutual interest.

An official handout said the discussion took place when Raphel called on Mostafiz at his office.

The Foreign Minister ap-

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News Analysis Hasina goes to China burying the past

by Nadeem Qadir, guest writer

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina leaves today on a 10-day visit to China, which ignored her Awami League for the past 22 years, burying the past. The visit has been described by analysts, as a major policy change on the part of the communist giant.

The analysts said it was a 'breakthrough' and a boost for the Awami League. All Bangladeshi governments upto now needed to maintain strong ties with China, a major defence and economic donor for this South Asian country.

The party's International Relations Secretary Abul Hasan

Chowdhury said "We are extremely happy and the party chief will discuss non-partisan issues as she is going to China as a national leader."

"We would like to bury the past and look forward to working with the Chinese leadership effectively in future," he said.

Deputy Opposition leader and former foreign minister Abdus Samad Azad and Chowdhury will be accompanying Hasina during the visit at the invitation of the central committee of the Communist Party of China.

China did not support Bang-

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'JCD to get rid of troublemakers'

Star Report

The central leaders of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) yesterday warned the Dhaka University (DU) JCD unit leaders, that any JCD member involved in extortion, carrying of firearms or participating in tender bids would be ousted from the party.

A JCD central leader told The Daily Star last night, after the expulsion of five JCD leaders Tuesday following the death of Jinnatul Islam Jinnah, that the JCD was, by and large, free from terrorist elements.

Meanwhile, even after our days of the killing neither the University Probe Body nor the police had made any progress in the investigation into the Jinnah murder case.

Jinnah, a student of the DU

and a central leader of the JCD, was killed Monday morning at the Registrar's Building by some gunmen, reportedly belonging to a faction of the JCD. Three university employees were also seriously injured during the attack.

In an emergency meeting held at the DUCSU Bhaban yesterday afternoon, presided over by JCD president Fazlul Haq Milon and attended by general secretary Nazimuddin Alam, the central leaders asked the DU JCD leaders not to move around in large groups at the hall premises, as this creates tension on the campus.

The meeting was also attended, among others, by Abul Khayer Bhuiyan, Shahiduddin Chowdhury and Shahjahan

Hawladar. When contacted, a JCD leader said last night: "No amount of lobbying would save a terrorist from expulsion." He added: "No minister, as reported in the newspapers, is backing any particular group of the JCD or creating divisions in the party."

The LGRD Minister Abdus Salam Talukder, many student organisations allege, is backing the Milon Group and the Home Minister is supporting the Nazimuddin group. Jinnah, who had himself reportedly clubbed another JCD activist, Pavel, to death in March last, belonged to the Milon group.

The JCD central body sources expressed their igno-

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Ishaq, Mazari opt out of Pak presidential race

ISLAMABAD, Nov 4: Ten candidates were left in the Pakistan presidential race after four, including former president Ghulam Ishaq Khan, pulled out on the last day for withdrawals here today, reports AFP.

On November-13 the next president will be elected for a five-year term by an electoral college made up of members of parliament and the four provincial assemblies.

Ishaq Khan and former caretaker premier Balkh Sher Mazari sent their withdrawals after an official deadline expired at noon, the Election Commission said.

Asked who was responsible for turning back the plane, she snapped, "You know who the prime minister is."

Nusrat Bhutto said her daughter's government was worse than the martial law period, a reference to the military dictatorship that ousted the elder Bhutto from the prime minister's post in 1977. He was hanged in 1979.

Meanwhile, AFP adds: A presiding judge of the Karachi-based special court dealing with the charges against Murtaza Bhutto, brother of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, has been transferred off the case.

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Murtaza Bhutto held at Karachi airport

KARACHI, Nov 4: Police arrested and jailed the fugitive brother of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on Thursday, moments after his plane landed and he ended 16 years in exile, reports AP.

Ms. Bhutto, 40, and her brother Murtaza, Bhutto, 39, are bitter political rivals. Their feud has split Pakistan's most prominent family. Bhutto allegedly plotted a 1981 plane hijacking to Afghanistan in an attempt to overthrow the military regime that overthrew and executed their father, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Police arrested Bhutto on the tarmac at 2 am, moments after

he arrived on an Ethiopian Airlines flight. His mother, Nusrat Bhutto, greeted him briefly before he was whisked away.

Finally my son has arrived, I am happy, said Nusrat Bhutto, who was sharply critical of the way her daughter's government handled the affair.

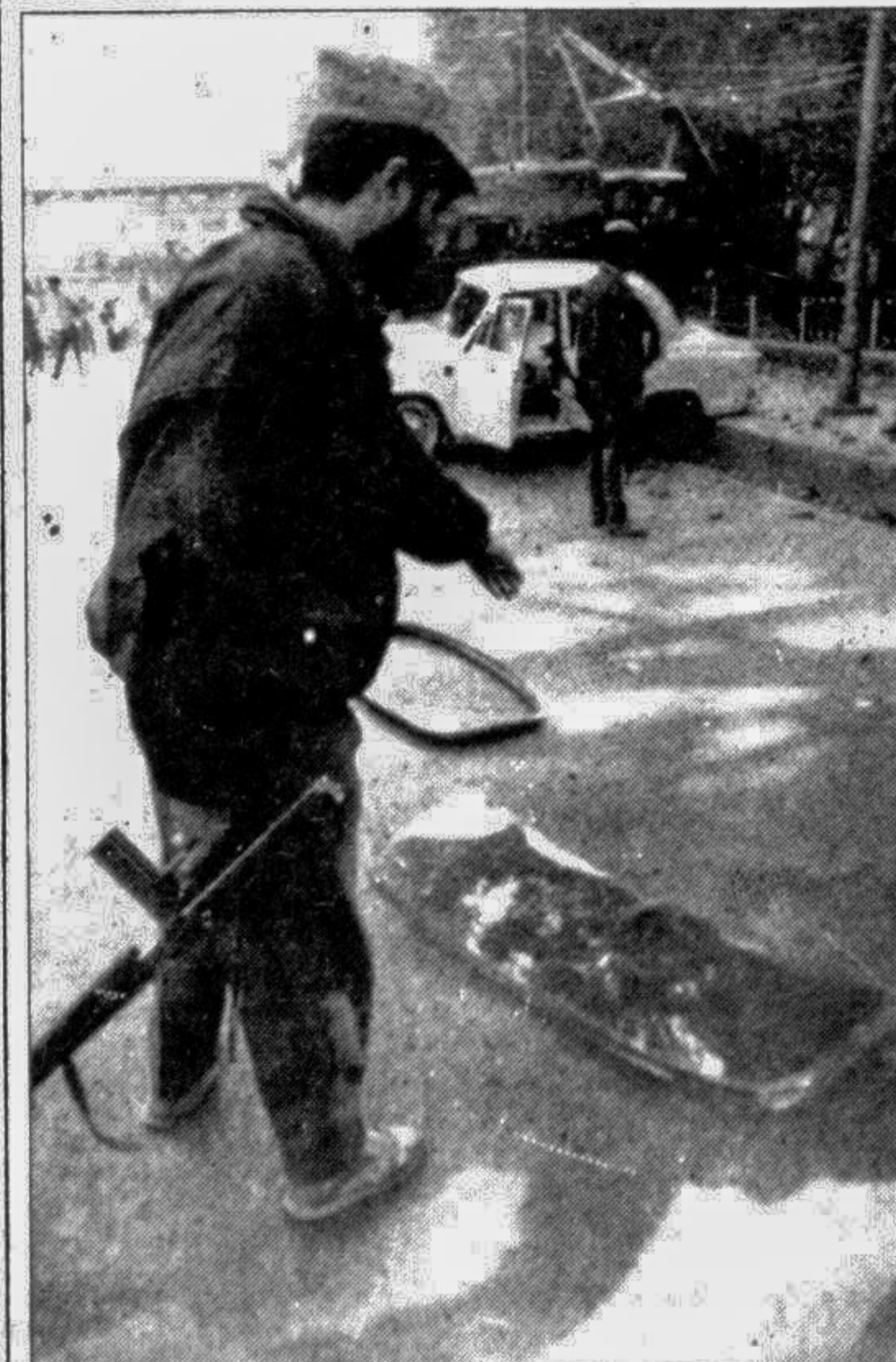
Bhutto's arrest ended a day and night of drama at the airport, but Bhutto and his sister are sure to continue their political battle. The two don't have any real ideological differences, but both see themselves as the political successor to their father.

Bhutto was expected to make his first court appearance

November 13 in Peshawar, according to police.

On Wednesday, some 5,000 supporters loyal to Bhutto smashed windows as they tried to force their way inside the terminal. At least 37 people were injured when police fired tear gas canisters to drive off the mob, which regrouped repeatedly in the parking lot.

Bhutto was not on that flight. He tried to come later on a chartered Syrian Airlines plane that was refused permission to land because it did not have a proper license, said a government official, who requested anonymity. The plane returned to the United Arab Emirates, leaving Nusrat Bhutto



An Indian army soldier looks at the windshield of the car that collided with an army truck yesterday killing one of its occupants — Wajahat Habibullah — a senior Kashmiri official negotiating peace with the separatist militants. — AFP photo