

81 killed in Chinese toy factory fire

BEIJING, Nov 20: A fire that swept through a toy factory killed 81 workers and injured 36 others, most of them women who couldn't flee because doors and windows were locked, an official newspaper said Saturday, reports AP.

The fire Friday raged through the first two floors of the three-story Zhili Handicraft Factory in Kuyong, an industrial zone in the southern boomtown of Shenzhen near the border with Hong Kong.

The Shenzhen government said the factory was a joint venture with Hong Kong, but refused to identify the Hong Kong partner.

"Because of the factory's sealed way of operating, corridors were narrow and the doors were locked, the workers couldn't evacuate in time," China's Communist Party newspaper, the People's Daily (Renmin Ribao), said in a three-inch-long fourth-page article.

Most of the casualties were burned, suffocated or crushed to death in the hallways and stairwells as they fled the blaze, according to the Ta Kung Pao, a Hong Kong newspaper funded by China.

It said more than 10 people jumped from windows of an adjoining building to escape.

The Wen Wei Po, another Hong Kong newspaper funded by China, said the factory managers had locked windows and

covered them with steel bars to guard against theft. It said fire authorities sent the factory a notice in March ordering it to make changes.

Ta Kung Pao said about 240 workers were in the factory when the fire broke out at about 1:40 pm (0540 gm) in the area of the first-floor generator room. It said several workers tried to put it out with fire extinguishers but the blaze quickly engulfed boxes of dolls and raw materials, including cotton cloth.

Wei Wei Po said 79 of the 81 workers who died were women. Most were from elsewhere in China, part of the new army of rural workers who have flocked to coastal regions in search of higher incomes.

Students damage vehicles in city

By Staff Correspondent

Students damaged at least a dozen vehicles yesterday at Mirpur while protesting the arrest of one of their mates.

Scores of crackers were exploded during the rampage which began at 10 am and continued for three hours. Riot police brought the situation under control by resorting to baton-charge.

The roads adjacent to Mirpur section-10 were blocked to traffic for three hours.

Saifur's press confce

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many issues with Japan and highlighted the importance of Tokyo in our bilateral relations," Rahman observed.

"The issue of resettlement has now turned out to be the decisive issue for Japan," Rahman said. "The Japanese government wants to see if the evicted people from the proposed bridge site were properly and adequately compensated."

"We told the Japanese counterpart that our compensation amount has been increased from 16 million US dollars to 46 million dollars which is more than adequate," the minister told the newsmen.

"We also told them that if need be, we will further increase the amount, but the project cannot stall because of this issue." The project should go on alongside the rehabilitation programme, he commented.

The JMBP will evict 11,000 families from 5,000 acres of land in the project area.

Talking about other areas of discussions during his five-day visit to Japan, Rahman said a Japanese team would arrive here in early December to study the feasibility for development of two gas fields at Bakhrabad and Fenl.

"This has become imperative because there would be an acute gas shortage for operation of the KAFCO and Raizan power plants," he said. "The pressure of gas in the line has already dropped."

Both the Japanese government and the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry had shown interest in setting up industries here, Rahman said. "But they want to be assured of a sufficient flow of power supply," he added.

"We also sought Japanese assistance in building a number of bridges—the Bhairob bridge, the Dhaleswari bridge and the Kushiara bridge."

PM at Chatkhil

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grain should be strengthened to ensure development.

She said the government has reduced the prices of agricultural inputs which had yielded a positive impact on the agriculture production. "We can now plan for exporting foodgrains instead of importing them."

Hasina wishes prosperity of armed forces

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday wished continued progress and prosperity of Army, Navy and Air Forces on the occasion of the Armed Forces Day, reports UNB.

In a message, Hasina described the armed forces as a unique symbol of national glory and paid glowing tributes to those members of the armed forces who had sacrificed their lives during the country's Liberation War in 1971. She expressed her sympathy for the members of the bereaved families.

The Awami League president congratulated members of the armed forces for joining the Liberation War as well as building defence forces in independent Bangladesh.

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The Tribal Welfare Association brought out a colourful rally in observance of the World Indigenous Year in Mymensingh town yesterday. — Star photo

Indo-Bangla border confce begins tomorrow

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Nov 20: A four-day long conference between the BDR and the BSF will begin here Monday. According to BDR sources, a 12-member team of the BSF led by IG of the South Bengal Frontier Balkar Singh will represent the Indian side while a nine-member BDR team led by the DDG BDR Brigadier Ifekharul Bashar, PSC will represent Bangladesh in the conference.

The other members of the Indian team are the IG of North Bengal BSF R M Bhattacharya, IPS and the sector Commanders of Calcutta, Krishnanagar, Shulligury, Maldaha, Kuchbihar and Kishitangang and four other officers.

The members of the Bangladesh side are the Sector Commander of Khulna Col. Mushtaq Ahmed PSC, Col. Mafizur Rahman of the Dinajpur sector, Col. Lenin Kamal, PSC of the Rangpur sector, Lt. Col. Mahbubur Rahman, PSC of the Kushtia sector, Lt. Col. Ashfaq Ahmed Choudhury, PSC of the Rajshahi sector and three other officers.

The conference will be held on Monday and Tuesday at a local hotel and on Wednesday and Thursday in Dhaka.

The agenda of the conference includes border disputes, and arrangement of routine talks. However, the push-in problem is not on the agenda, the BDR sources said. But if both the side agree, it may also be discussed, sources added.

Armed Forces Day today

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Muhammad Noor Uddin Khan, Chief of the Naval Staff Rear Admiral Mohammad Mohaiminul Islam and Chief of the Air Staff Air Vice Marshall Altaf Hossain Chowdhury will also offer wreaths at the Shikha Anirban.

President Biswas and Prime Minister Begum Zia issued separate messages on the occasion, stressing the need for further strengthening and consolidating national independence and sovereignty through a firm unity and combined efforts of the people and the Armed Forces.

CHT talks

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keeping with the conditions put forth by the Shantibahini to facilitate their attendance at the talks, highly placed sources said.

The government last week sent a letter to the leaders of the tribal rebels proposing a sixth round of dialogue on November 24. A reply to the letter was received yesterday through the convenor of the Liaison Committee Hongshad Chakma.

The fifth round of peace talks between the special parliamentary committee headed by Communications Minister Col (Rtd) Oli Ahmed and the Shantibahini team was held on September 18 at the Khagrachhari circuit house.

Prime Minister Begum Zia will meet the nearest ones of Shaheed Captain Mohiuddin Zahangir, Bir Shrestha, Shaheed Sepoy Mostafa Kamal, Bir Shrestha, and Shaheed Sepoy Syed Hamidur Rahman, Bir Shrestha, Shaheed Ruhul Amin, ERA-1, Bir Shrestha, Shaheed Flight Lt M Mattur Rahman, Bir Shrestha, Shaheed Lance Naik Munshi Abdur Rauf, Bir Shrestha, and Shaheed Lance Naik Noor Mohammad, Bir Shrestha.

These include special 'Darbar' highlighting the significance of the day in all units, 'preeti bhoj' to be attended by officers and JCOs, soldiers, sailors, airmen and members of their families, improved diet in all military hospitals and cinema for the soldiers, sailors, airmen and members of their families.

Besides, a special programme titled 'Tomar Apon Pataka' will be telecast at 8:30 pm today.

Chiefs of Staff of the three services will also attend the reception. Similar receptions will also be hosted by the Chiefs of Staff of the three services in their respective headquarters.

The three Chiefs will make a courtesy call on the President at Bangabhaban. They will also pay a courtesy call on the Prime Minister at the PM's office, Armed Forces Division, at the Dhaka Cantonment.

Yesterday's rally was addressed, among others, by the party's presidium member Abdul Mannan, General Secretary Zillur Rahman, Abur Razzak MP, Tofael Ahmed MP, Mohammad Nasim MP, Abdul Jaill and Amir Hossain Amu.

Abul Mannan, while addressing the rally, observed that the Prime Minister should resign for her comment against Parliament and announce fresh elections immediately.

Tofael Ahmed accused the government of corrupt practices and once again said that he would resign if he failed to prove his allegations of corruption against the Irrigation and Flood Control Ministry and the minister concerned.

Mohammad Nasim accused most of the cabinet members, ruling party MPs and a few relatives of the Prime Minister of corruption.

PM goes to Nepal tomorrow

Prime Minister Begum Khaleida Zia leaves Dhaka tomorrow (Monday) for Kathmandu on a three-day official visit to the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal, reports UNB.

The visit is taking place at the invitation of Nepalese Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala.

Begum Zia's 25-member entourage will include Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman, Selina Shaheed MP, Principal Secretary to the PM, KM Rabbani, Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman, Chief of Protocol Masum Ahmed Chowdhury and Director General (South Asia) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ifekhar Ahmed Chowdhury.

During the visit, Begum Zia will have wide-ranging talks with her Nepalese counterpart covering bilateral matters and regional and international issues of common concern.

Expansion of bilateral trade and economic cooperation and transit facilities for the landlocked Himalayan kingdom are expected to figure prominently in her talks with the Nepalese leaders.

The issue of sharing of the water of the Ganges, an international river flowing through Nepal, India and Bangladesh, is also likely to come up for discussion.

The conference will be held on Monday and Tuesday at a local hotel and on Wednesday and Thursday in Dhaka.

The agenda of the conference includes border disputes, and arrangement of routine talks. However, the push-in problem is not on the agenda, the BDR sources said. But if both the side agree, it may also be discussed, sources added.

President Biswas and Prime Minister Begum Zia issued separate messages on the occasion, stressing the need for further strengthening and consolidating national independence and sovereignty through a firm unity and combined efforts of the people and the Armed Forces.

A reception to the next of kin of the soldiers who received gallantry awards "Bir Shrestha" will be held at the Prime Minister's office, Armed Forces Division, at the Dhaka Cantonment.

Prime Minister Begum Zia will meet the nearest ones of Shaheed Captain Mohiuddin Zahangir, Bir Shrestha, Shaheed Sepoy Mostafa Kamal, Bir Shrestha, and Shaheed Sepoy Syed Hamidur Rahman, Bir Shrestha, Shaheed Ruhul Amin, ERA-1, Bir Shrestha, Shaheed Flight Lt M Mattur Rahman, Bir Shrestha, Shaheed Lance Naik Munshi Abdur Rauf, Bir Shrestha, and Shaheed Lance Naik Noor Mohammad, Bir Shrestha.

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Karnaphuli boat capsized: 1 more body recovered

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Nov 20: The body of a 50-year-old woman named Sura Khatun was recovered today from the Karnaphuli river, raising the known death toll in Friday's boat capsizing here to six, police and port officials said.

Earlier, the death figure was recorded at five, including two women and two children when an overcrowded passenger boat capsized after being hit by a fishing trawler Friday morning near Mooring No 5 in the Karnaphuli river.

Meanwhile, the sunken boat was retrieved by the Chittagong Port Authority's salvage vessels this afternoon after several attempts since last night.

Port officials said the salvage operation was delayed due to the strong current in the river.

A case was filed with the Port thana today against the driver of the engine boat. But police could not yet trace the fishing trawler.

UNEP-Habitat chief due today

By Staff Correspondent

The Under-Secretary-General for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UN Centre for Human Settlement (Habitat) Ms Elizabeth Dowdeswell arrives in Dhaka this morning for a two-day visit at the invitation of the Bangladesh government.

Ms Dowdeswell will meet Prime Minister Begum Khaleida Zia and other ministers and discuss matters of mutual interest.

During her meeting with the Prime Minister this afternoon, Habitat's assistance programme as well as the UNEP's disaster mitigating efforts in Bangladesh will come up for discussion.

In Kathmandu, Begum Zia is scheduled to address the concluding session of the SAARC Ministerial Meeting on Women and Family Health, being held in the Nepalese capital. She will also visit the SAARC secretariat.

Besides, she will address members of the Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industries.

President of the Nepalese Women Organisation Mrs. Mongol Devi Singh will call on the Bangladesh Prime Minister.

They also argued that the Prime Minister made her observations outside the House and had already clarified her position by saying her comments were intended to help Parliament function more effectively.

Not convinced, the opposition members insisted on incorporating the issue into the agenda for discussion. The advisory committee, however, did not take any decision on the issue.

An Awami League (AL) representative told The Daily Star that they would demand a discussion on the Prime Minister's comments everyday in the House until the Speaker allowed a debate on the issue.

However, the advisory body decided that the present session would last ten days. The body would, of course, meet again to evaluate an extension of the session in case of any emergency.

For the opening day of the session, the advisory committee decided to adjourn the House just after the question-answer hour so that Parliament members could attend the ceremonial function of today's Arms Forces Day.

Meanwhile, both the ruling BNP and opposition AL held meetings of their parliamentary wings yesterday evening to decide their respective strategies during the session.

The AL Parliamentary Party meeting was adjourned yesterday to resume again at 3 this afternoon. Party chief Sheikh Hasina presided.

The BNP Parliamentary Party meeting was held with Prime Minister and leader of the House Begum Khaleida Zia in the chair.

The leaders of the parliamentary party, while addressing the meeting, told the MPs that they were well prepared to face any allegations brought by the Opposition benches.

The Midnight File

Shevardnadze extends emergency

TBILISI, Nov 20: Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze extended emergency rule in his troubled former Soviet republic on Saturday and asked increasingly disenchanted lawmakers to ratify his decision on Sunday. The state of emergency, introduced two months ago to combat lawlessness and an insurrection in western Georgia, had been scheduled to expire Saturday. But Shevardnadze issued a decree extending it until January 20, reports AP.

Baltic states form jt military force

TALLINN, Nov 20: Chief commanders from the three former Soviet Baltic republics announced the creation of a joint Baltic battalion Saturday and said they would move toward further military cooperation. "We are all in total agreement about closer cooperation," said Aleksander Einsele, a retired American colonel who heads Estonia's military.

Clinton asks China to improve human rights

SEATTLE (Washington), Nov 20: President Bill Clinton issued a strong call to China to improve its human rights record here Friday in the first US-China summit since the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989, reports APF.

The meeting with President Jiang Zemin followed a shift in US policy towards Beijing to one of "constructive engagement."

Clinton has sought since taking office in January to pressure China into improving its human rights record by such means as linking human rights to renewal of China's privileged trading status.

But six months down the road US officials are saying that progress to date has not been sufficient to warrant a renewal, and Washington has taken a different tack towards this major trading partner and needed ally in the problem of North Korea's nuclear programme.

"Anybody should be reluctant to isolate a country as big as China," Clinton said after Friday's meeting.

"I don't think you ever lose anything by talking with someone."

"I was forthright about our common interests and our clear differences," Clinton said, and "We agreed on the need to work on improving our relationship."

Clinton stressed the need for "early concrete progress on aspects of China policy," in three key areas: Human rights, trade and non-proliferation.

"I told President Jiang that I welcome our dialogue on human rights and I hope we can make significant progress on these issues very soon," Clinton said.

Prokrichi, BCS start 2-hr strike

Prokrichi (engineers, agriculturists, doctors) and BCS Central Action Council yesterday began a six-day programme of two-hour work stoppage every day to press for restructuring the administrative system, reports UNB.

The Council held rallies at government offices, institutions and corporations in the capital and different districts during the countryside token strike yesterday, said a press release.

Speakers at the rallies urged the government to meet their 17-point demand for establishing a democratic administrative system accountable

Doubts over Biman's

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18,1992 with a starting capital of 100,000 dollar derived from the 100,000 savings of an affiliated company. It has only one officer, who is himself the president. There are no other employees.

The line of business, as stated in the New York Corporate and Business Registration, is: Exports — Commodities Aluminium. To date the company has been selling wheat, sugar, soyabean oil etc. The company claims it has a 780 sq feet office in New York.

Biman officials, when asked, confirmed the details of Concorde's offer but declined to comment.

Experts in the aviation trade feel that the bid offer made by Concorde should not even have been considered, not to mention being included in the short list.

One expert pointed out that when all international credit is tied to purchase of commodity or its use specifically detailed in any financial package, the highly exaggerated offer of 200 million dollar by Concorde to Biman to procure two Airbus which would not cost more than 100 million "looks too good to

be taken on face value." The lack of authenticity of the financing arrangement offered by this particular bidder raises doubts about the transparency and accountability of the entire selection process followed by Biman, experts feel.

Sources said, these facts, as revealed, raise serious doubts about the rigour with which Biman followed its own procurement process, suggesting that perhaps the highest authorities need to look into the affair before the national flag carrier falls into deep financial crisis by going ahead with the purchase of the planes.

Saifur

From Page 1 Col 5

because of the NGOs who made a big fuss over the issue," the minister said adding: "The NGOs are doing these without considering the effects."

The Japanese government has now become very sensitive over such social and environmental issues because of NGOs' criticisms regarding some projects in India and Indonesia.

Naniarchar

From Page 1 Col 4

ence, clamped Section 144 at Khagrachhari from today for seven days and have stepped up police patrol there.

The planned rally and demonstrations by the supporters of the Pahari Chhatra Parishad (Hilly Students' Council) at Khagrachhari in protest against the Naniarchar incidents, reportedly prompted the authorities to take such security measures, sources said.

As a result, today's programme of the Pahari Chhatra Parishad, could not be held. However, the leaders of the parishad submitted a memorandum today to the Deputy Commissioner of Khagrachhari demanding justice regarding the Naniarchar incidents.

Magistracies

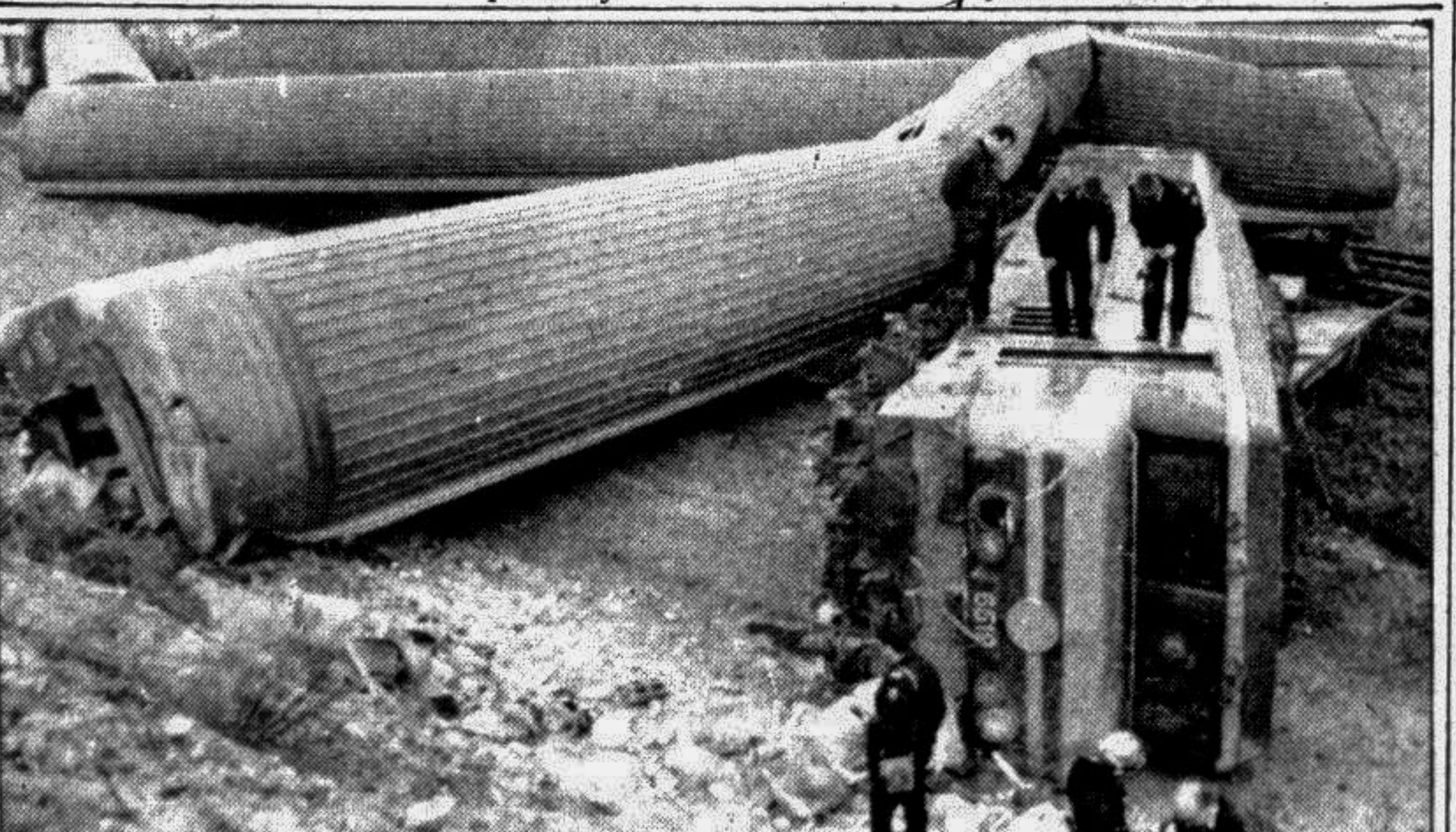
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maintain magistrate's court in their respective thanas for the interest of the people. The matter also came up for discussion at a cabinet meeting in July where the Law Ministry was advised to formulate a policy in this regard.

Initially the Law Ministry was against reversing the decision of shifting all the thana magistracies and took a rigid stand on it. However, the ministry later agreed with the recommendations made at the inter-ministerial meeting.

A source in the Ministry of Law said that the demands for maintaining courts in other thanas will be discouraged and no more requests from any quarter will be entertained. But, the chowki courts located in the distant areas will continue to function.

Courts at the thana level, both civil and criminal, were set up by the Ershad regime with effect from 20 April 1983.



French gendarmes and rescue teams inspecting the overturned carriages of a passenger train which derailed yesterday causing injuries to 15 people in the north of Montpellier in southern France. — AFP photo