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Chakma refugees return home from today

CHITTAGONG, Feb 14: All preparations are afoot to start the much expected but twice postponed repatriation of Chakma refugees from tomorrow morning through the Ramgarh border post of the Khagrachhari hill district.

Communications Minister Oli Ahmed and the governor of India's Tripura state Romesh Bhandari will be present to witness the beginning of the repatriation, which has been a source of irritation between the two South Asian neighbours.

According to official sources, elaborate arrangements have been made by the Bangladesh authorities to welcome the homecoming of the tribal refugees encamped in Tripura.

In the first phase of the repatriation, 405 families comprising 2000 tribal refugees will get back to their homesteads in the CHT between February 15 and 22, official sources said.

Out of this, the first batch consisting of 100 families will return to Bangladesh through the Ramgarh reception camp tomorrow while others will return in three separate batches through the Tabalchhari reception camp of Khagrachhari district, sources added.

Among them, 105 families will return on February 17, seventy-six families on February 19 and 124 families on February 22.

The repatriation is the outcome of the tripartite agreement recently concluded among the representatives of India, Bangladesh and the Tribal Refugees' Welfare Association.

The repatriation of Chakma refugees was stalled twice earlier despite all arrangements to receive them — initially in 1987 and later on June 8, 1993.

Over 50,000 tribal refugees fled across the border in 1986 at the instigation of the outlawed Shantibahini and took shelter in camps in Tripura in India.

Meanwhile, the local authorities at Ramgarh and Tabalchhari have erected temporary shelters for the tribals before their final rehabilitation in their own homesteads in different areas of CHT.

Reception committees and tribal rehabilitation committees have been formed to conduct the process smoothly, official sources informed.

Besides, the authorities stepped up security in Khagrachhari to ensure peaceful repatriation of the Chakma refugees.

Section 144 has been imposed there from February 4 to 24 in a bid to maintain law and order.

'India operates most unsafe N-plants'

WASHINGTON, Feb 14: CBS 60 Minutes, which has a very large nationwide audience, today charged that India is operating the most unsafe nuclear plants in the world without inspection by the Atomic Energy Agency, reports PTI.

The programme dovetails with US government policy of demanding fullscope safeguards in India and depriving the Indian armed forces, if they can, of any modern missiles on the ground that what India does is destabilising vis-a-vis Pakistan.

The programme is expected to be used both by officials and members of Congress to put further pressure on India.

The programme did carry an interview with an Indian official but in a context that cast doubt on the truth of what he was saying about India's ability to run nuclear plants without the International Atomic Energy Agency holding its reins.

WB reviews reforms next month

By Inam Ahmed

A mid-term evaluation meeting between the government and the World Bank (WB) prior to the Aid Group meeting is expected to take place in Washington in the second week of next month to discuss the country's economic reforms, project implementation and future strategies.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman will represent the Bangladesh side at the review meeting, according to an authoritative source.

The Bangladesh Aid Group meeting is scheduled to be held on April 19-20 in Paris.

According to sources, the utilisation of foreign aid, the capacity of the country's implementation agencies and reforms in the civil service will come up, among other issues, for discussion at the Paris meeting.

"The government is working on the meeting," a highly placed source said. "We have not yet figured out the amount we need next year. But then again, we do not ask for any specific amount of money at the meeting, as was the case last year."

Meanwhile, observers in Dhaka say, public criticism of the country's on-going economic reforms, as reflected in the recent mayoral elections, may be taken cognizance of at the Aid Group meeting. The government may ask the donors to move slowly in respect of the reform programmes, they said.

Their assumptions stem from the fact that a section of the ruling party had identified the massive reform programmes undertaken by the Finance Minister as one of the main causes of the BNP's failure in the mayoral elections in Dhaka and Chittagong.

However, the donors are firm on the reform issue, say sources.

Bangladesh off to fine start in ICC Trophy

Sports Reporter

Bangladesh posted a handsome seven-wicket win in their opening ICC Trophy cricket championship match which was completed in the Kenyan capital Nairobi yesterday.

Having bowled out the Argentinians for 120 on Sunday before rain forced the game into a second day, Bangladesh cantered to 123 for the loss of only three wickets in 35.2 of their stipulated 50 overs.

Detailed report on Page 10

Opener Athar Ali top-scored with 41 to earn the man-of-the-match award, followed by his opening partner Jahangir Alam who made 37.

The start of play was delayed by half an hour due to wet conditions following heavy overnight drizzles.

Bangladesh, seeded second in the 20-team competition, which offers the top three finishers berths in the next World Cup, play East Africa in their second group game today.

Obituary resolution put to vote Opposition walks out of Parliament

By Staff Correspondent

Amid a walkout by the entire Opposition, the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) yesterday adopted by voice vote a resolution condemning the Lalbagh incident in which six persons were killed on the 31st of last month.

The resolution also called for deterrent punishment to those responsible for the killings and rehabilitation of the people affected by the tragic incident.

Earlier the Opposition walked out in protest against the Speaker's decision to put the 'obituary resolution' to vote, saying the decision was a 'violation of all norms of parliamentary practice'.

The Opposition-sponsored resolution on the same incident, which was rejected by voice vote during the walkout, held 'BNP armed hoodlums' responsible for the killings.

The treasury bench, while requesting the Opposition to withdraw parts of the text blaming the BNP for the incident, argued there was no instance of parliamentary practice anywhere in the world in which an obituary resolution had been adopted blaming someone for a murder.

"Besides, it is the task of the court to identify and punish the killers," the treasury bench observed and fold the House that naming names before a trial would be tantamount to interference by the legislature with the judicial process.

With the Opposition, especially Deputy Leader Abdus Samad Azad, firm not to withdraw the controversial part of the resolution moved by him earlier, the Speaker put both the resolutions, one by one, to vote.

Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali, quoting from the Rules of Procedure, said that there were provisions to put resolutions to vote. He, however, admitted that putting obituary resolutions to vote was 'unfortunate and unusual'.

"With both the treasury and the Opposition benches sticking to their respective positions, I am left with no option but to put both the resolutions to vote," Shaikh Razzak Ali told the House.

Earlier, replying to the Opposition charges relating to the Lalbagh incident, Deputy Leader of the House Professor Badruddoza Chowdhury said, the government was equally shocked at the tragic killings.

Professor Chowdhury demanded punishment of the culprits.

Makhan to be buried today

By Staff Correspondent

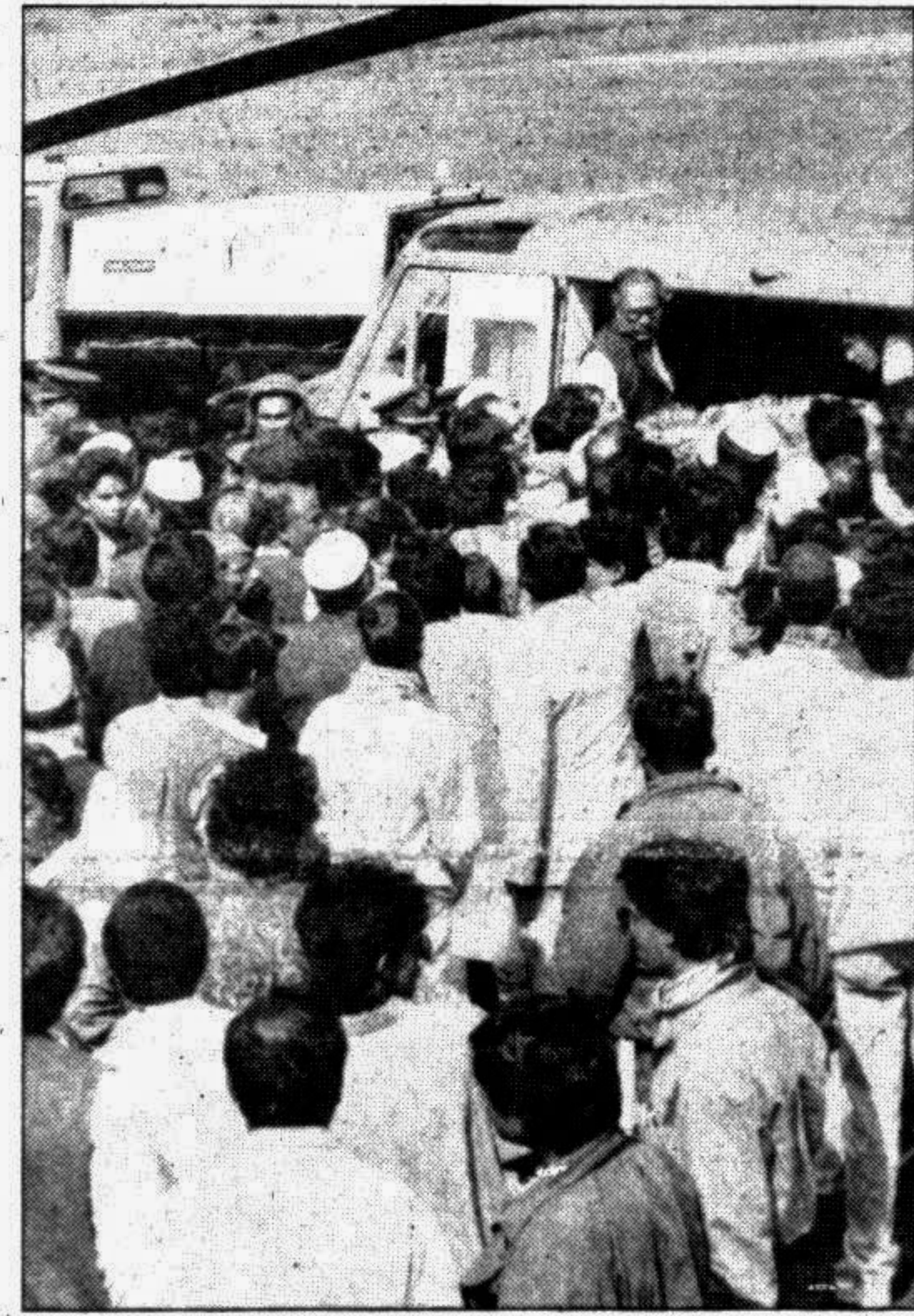
The burial of former DUCSU general secretary Abdul Quddus Makhan—a front-ranking leader during the mass movement leading to the independence of Bangladesh and a former Awami League member of Parliament—will take place today at the Mirpur Muktiyoddha (freedom fighters) graveyard.

The last namaz-e-janaza will be held today after Zohr prayers at the National Eidgah near the Supreme Court.

The body of Abdul Quddus Makhan arrived in Dhaka yesterday afternoon from the United States where he died of viral hepatitis on February 10 at a Florida hospital.

Leaders of different political parties including the ruling BNP, the Awami League and the JSD were present at the Zia airport to receive the body of Makhan who was one of the organisers of the Swadhin Bangla Kendrio Chhatra Sangram Parishad and actively took part in the country's Liberation War.

Also present at the airport were Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Abdul Mannan, State Minister for Relief Harunur Rashid, Amanullah Aman, MP, Awami League general secretary Zillur Rahman, Tofael Ahmed, MP, Abdur



The body of late Abdul Quddus Makhan is being lowered from a helicopter at the Zia Airport on its return from Brahmanbaria, the deceased's ancestral home, yesterday. Makhan, who died in the United States Feb 10, will be buried in the city this afternoon. — Star photo

Pak special envoy arrives today

A special envoy of Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto arrives here today to deliver a message to her Bangladesh counterpart Begum Khaleda Zia, official sources said, reports UNB.

During his two-day stay, Khaled Selim, senior-most Additional Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, will also call on Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman and Foreign Secretary Mufleh Rahman Osmany.

Islamabad is sending special envoys to different capitals to explain its resolute stance on the Kashmir issue and the present explosive situation in the valley in the wake of struggle for independence of the Kashmiri Muslims.

Aminul Haq apologises to press

Attorney General Aminul Haq yesterday offered an unqualified apology if his conduct had hurt the journalists or the newspapers, reports NFS.

In an exclusive interview with the NFS, the Attorney General also expressed his gratitude to the press for all the cooperation he had earlier received while carrying out his duties.

Serious confusion prevailed in the press regarding his reported resignation. Last Thursday Aminul Haq announced his decision to resign to a group of newsmen in his office. He called on the Prime minister two days later and a confusion arose when he issued statement to the press following his meeting with the PM. His statement apparently contradicted all the news reports published on the issue.

Haq said, "I did not say anything regarding my resignation after what had happened since February 10."

"The actual submission of resignation and the expression of one's intention to resign are not the same thing," he said. "My statement (Saturday) created the confusion in the sense that it contained some wrong words, for which I myself am responsible," Haq reportedly told NFS yesterday.

Daring burglary at Dhanmondi

By Staff Correspondent

Robbers attired in military fatigues burgled the house of a lawyer in the city's Dhanmondi area last night.

In the 10-minute heist, the five robbers took away a VCP and gold ornaments from person of the lady of the house. They also ransacked two rooms, searching for money, said an occupant of the house.

The burglars, led by a middle-aged man, also included a young girl aged about 20.

Witnesses said, thieves entered the house at Road No 15 (Old) by an auto-rickshaw and two motorbikes, the types usually used by policemen. They barged into the first floor of the two-storey building at around 8-15 last night, witnesses added.

The house owner, advocate AM Nuruddin Ahmed, and his two sons were at a nearby mosque for their tarab prayers. Only Nuruddin's wife and a maid were at home.

The thieves confined Mrs

NEWS BRIEFS

Cabinet meet held

The regular weekly meeting of the cabinet was held yesterday at Bangabhaban with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair. Ministers, State Ministers in charge of different ministries and divisions attended the meeting, said an official handout without giving details, reports UNB.

Magura polls: BNP nominates Kamal

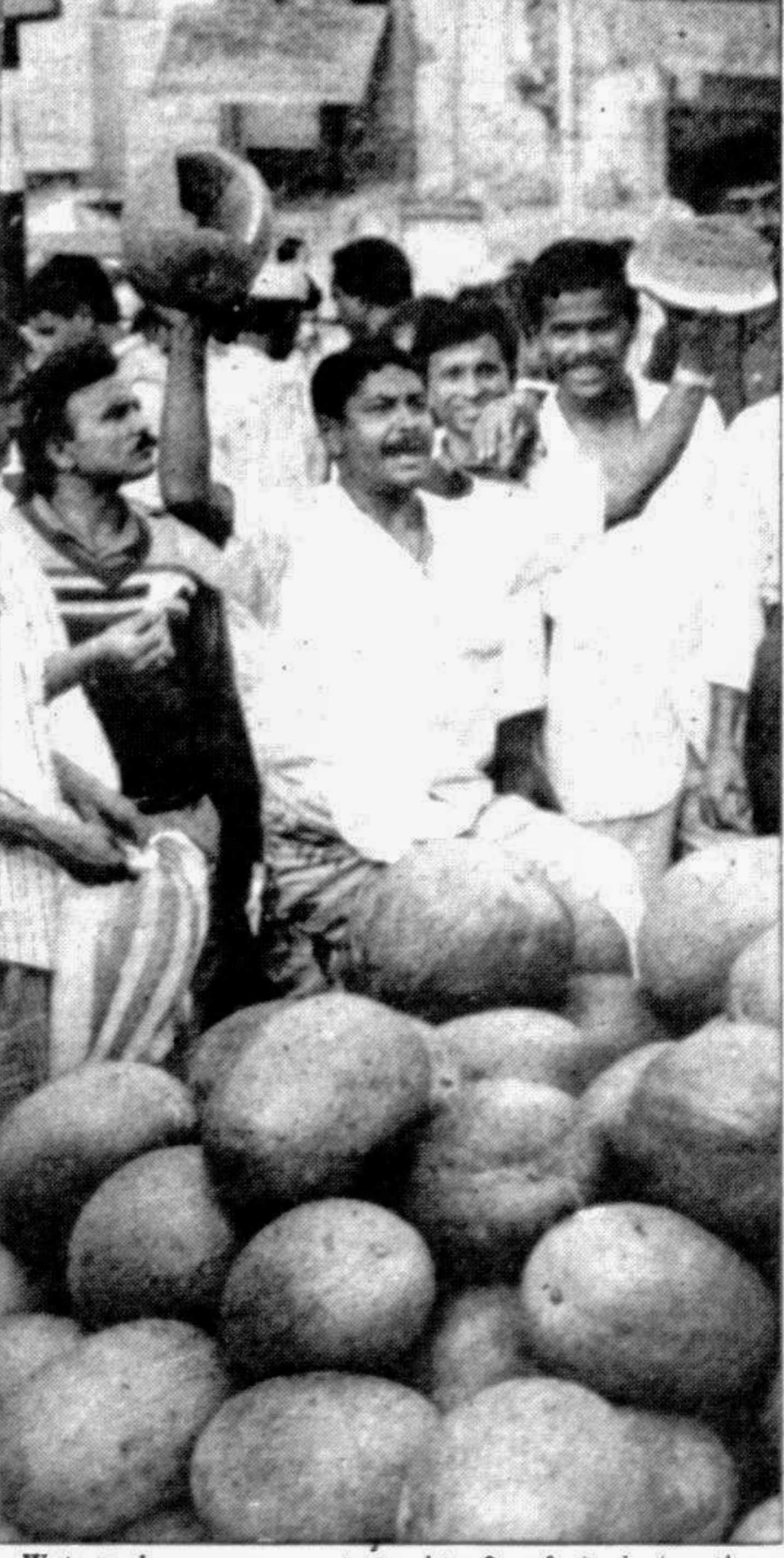
Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) yesterday nominated Qazi Saleemul Haq (Kamal) as its candidate for the parliamentary by-election in Magura-2 constituency. The nomination was decided in the BNP standing committee meeting held here in the evening with BNP chairperson and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair, reports BSS.

Varsity teachers' strike tomorrow

Teachers of all universities in the country will go on a strike tomorrow in protest against government move to amend the University Ordinance, 1973. All examinations will be exempted from the strike, called by the Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers' Association (FBUTA), said a press release signed by DUTA General Secretary Dr AAMS Arefin Siddique, reports UNB.

Sehri, Iftar timings

Rmdn	Feb	Sehri	Iftar
03	15	—	6:00 pm
04	16	5:10 am	6:00 pm
05	17	5:10 am	6:01 pm



Watermelons — a most sought after fruit during the month of Ramadan — have appeared in the city markets but the prices are exorbitant. — Star photo

Govt denies new golden handshake in railway

The government yesterday described as "sheer misleading, and imaginary" the report published in a section of the press that Bangladesh Railway was going to introduce a new golden handshake programme, an official handout said last night, reports BSS.

The government also termed as misleading the report on non-payment of the dues to the employees who opted for voluntary retirement, it said.

In a clarification the government said Bangladesh Railway introduced the voluntary retirement programme in November 1992. Under this programme 11,290 officers and employees had opted for voluntary retirement. Of them applications of ten thousand officers and employees were finally accepted.

Under the conditions laid in the programme the applicants would seek retirement on any day before December 1993 and payment of dues would be given to them in two instalments when their application will be finally accepted.

JU JCD leader arrested

By JU Correspondent

Savar police arrested a Jatayatadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader of the Jahangirnagar University on charges of criminal activities.

The JCD leader Shafiqul Islam known as Jiban Shafiq was arrested from his Savar residence on Saturday. Shafiq is a third year Honours student of Government and Politics Department. He reportedly led the 'local faction' of the JCD in the recent violence on the Jahangirnagar University campus.

Winter to continue till end of Feb

The prevailing winter is likely to continue till the end of February, a senior weather expert told UNB yesterday.

"After that a slow process of transition from cold to warm weather is likely," Sajedur Rahman, Deputy Director of Storm Warning Centre at the Met office said.

But people will feel a relatively fine weather from mid-March. Sajedur said adding that this "warm spell" will be frequently broken by evening thunderstorm which is known as kalbaisakhki.

He said the transition period in April-May is also vulnerable for cyclone in the Bay.

"Till end of February, on occasion there will be light to dense fog leading to poor visibility and may hinder riverine traffic," the weather expert added.

NEMAP takes off soon to meet WB deadline

By Masud Hasan Khan

The National Environment Management Action Plan (NEMAP) takes off soon amid a flurry of government activities because of a June 30 deadline set by the World Bank drawing near.

The government is now giving final touches to the draft NEMAP by arranging a series of 24 workshops all over the country to elicit opinion of the people, officials said.

The World Bank had earlier cautioned that all funds to Bangladesh would be suspended if the draft was not prepared in consultation with the public and presented before June 30, sources said.

The Board of Directors of the bank has made it mandatory for the countries to formulate the National Environment Action Plan (NEAP) before receiving soft credits from the bank.

NEMAP, Bangladesh's counterpart of the World Bank's NEAP, is being charted by the Forest and Environment Ministry with technical assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Drafting of the plan started in 1991.

The World Bank and the UNDP had earlier repeatedly pointed out to the Economic Relations Division of the government that Bangladesh should present an 'acceptable' NEAP ahead of receiving funds.

However, the NEMAP draft could not be okayed because of outright rejection by environment officials.

US likely to begin imposing trade bans on Japan today

WASHINGTON, Feb 14: President Clinton's administration on Monday weighed a range of possible trade sanctions against Japan in the aftermath of last week's collapse of trade talks. The White House said the first could come as early as Tuesday, reports AP.

The United States was expected to impose high tariffs on Japanese made cellular telephones Tuesday as an initial — but very specific — form of retaliation.

"It's under review now," White House Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers said Monday.

She said that US Trade Representative Mickey Kantor was poised to make an announcement on the phone issue Tuesday.

The move stems from long complaints by the Motorola Co. of the United States about difficulty selling its cellular phones in Japan.

Administration officials said that such a move would only be an opening step and that more sanctions could follow.

Laura D'Andrea Tyson, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, said there will be a series of meetings and a series of actions.

But, speaking at a White House briefing on the economy, Tyson shrugged off suggestions that the United States was on the brink of opening a trade war with Japan.

"We should not be talking about a trade war now. There has been no action taken," she said.

Administration officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said that President Clinton was considering issuing an executive order renewing