The Daily Star

India rejects Ghali's mediation offer

NEW DELHI, Sept 12: India on Monday rejected an offer by the UN secretary-general to act as "an honest broker" in starting direct talks between Indian and Pakistan on the Kashmir dispute, reports AP.

"We do not want anyone to come between us and Pakistan on Kashmir, which is a totally bilateral issue," Arif S Khan, the spokesman for India's External Affairs Ministry told reporters.

Before leaving New Delhi on Saturday at the end of his six-day tour of India and Pakistan, Boutros Boutros-Ghali had said that he hoped both sides would accept his offer.

Boutros-Ghali should persuade Pakistan to agree to bilateral talks on Kashmir and not try to "internationalize" the issue, Khan said.

Khan also rebutted Boutros-Ghali's remark that India, as well as Pakistan, lacked political will to find a solution to the Kashmir dispute, which led to two wars since the Himalayan territory was divided in 1947. Both sides admit that a future war could be fought with nuclear weapons.

"We are ready for any date proposed by Pakistan for talks," Khan said.

"The role of the secretary-general is to encourage the two parties to talk to each other," Boutros-Ghali had said on Saturday. But he had also added: "For the time being, I feel it will need stronger political will."

Pakistan has favored a solution brokered by a third party over direct bilateral negotiations.

In 1972, one year after India and Pakistan had fought their last war, the two countries agreed on a framework to find a negotiated settlement to Kashmir. But subsequent attempts to get talks started have broken down because neither side was ready to compromise.

More than 9,500 people have died in the Indian part of Kashmir since Muslim discontent with India's rule erupted into a guerrilla campaign almost five years ago. Indian and Pakistani troops, who face each other across a disputed frontier, regularly exchange fire.

The Awami League brought out a torch procession in the city yesterday to rally support for today's dawn-to-dusk hartal. — Star photo

Stray incidents mark hartal

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vehicular movement on the city roads was disrupted and the private offices and business centres remained closed. Some double-deckers and buses of BRTC were found plying in groups of three or four on a certain route, under police escort, carrying a few passengers.

Rickshaws plied on some of the city roads and lanes, mostly in the northern parts of the city. Some of those, however, came under attack by the pickets and street urchins.

Buses and other vehicles were attacked by the pickets also in Farm Gate, Gulistan and Mohakhali areas.

Sources at the Sadarghat terminal said plying of launches was almost normal. Train services were also unaffected.

Awami League, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and their student wings brought out processions in the city in support of the hartal.

An anti-hartal procession of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, Mirpur Bangla College unit, was also seen on a road adjacent to the college.

Bangladesh Chhatra League (M-I), student wing of the Awami League, held a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club. It claimed that 30 people were arrested in the city during the hartal hours. The rally was addressed by Enamul Huq Shamim.

Our Staff Correspondent from Chittagong adds: Normal life was disrupted in this port city yesterday because of an eight-hour hartal from 6 am.

No untoward incident was reported barring some sporadic blasts of crackers at different points in the city.

Most of the vehicles stayed off the roads while a small number of rickshaws were seen plying.

Railway sources said train service was as usual.

City markets and shopping arcades remained closed. Besides, offices and banks could not function normally due to thin attendance. Production in mills and factories here was also affected.

Chittagong Port sources said delivery of goods to and from the port was hampered though cargo handling inside the jetties was as usual.

Delivery of some consignments from the port was made under police escort, port officials said.

Police contingents were deployed at important points in the city.

According to reports received from Rajshahi, an eight-hour hartal was observed in the divisional headquarters peacefully barring some sporadic clashes between the police and the picketers.

A clash took place at the Laxmipur crossing when police reportedly lathicharged the participants of Jatiya Party procession at 10 am.

Chase and counter-chase between the JP activists and the police continued for some time.

Another clash between the police and the supporters of hartal took place at Sahebbazar crossing. None was, however, injured.

Activists of Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami brought out separate processions during the hartal hours.

Local BNP activists also brought out an anti-hartal procession in the evening.

Separate processions were brought out by the student wings of the three opposition parties on the Rajshahi University.

Our staff correspondent from Barisal adds: An eight-hour hartal was observed in the city peacefully. No untoward incident took place and none was arrested during the hartal period.

UNB reports from Khulna: A half-day hartal was observed in Khulna peacefully.

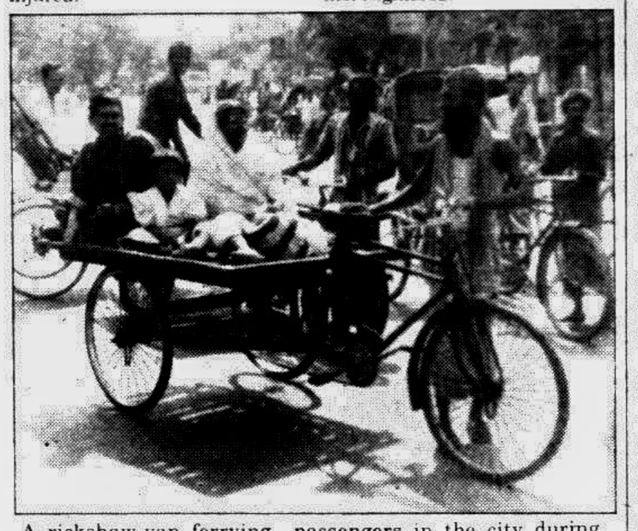
All modes of transport, including rickshaws, were off the roads during the 6 am to 2 pm hartal.

Educational institutions and business establishments remained closed. Government offices were open but attendance was thin.

Banks functioned but there was little transaction or no transaction during the hartal period.

Work continued normally in Mongla port and Khalishpur industrial area. Train services to and from the city were also normal.

Hartal supporters brought out processions in the morning and paraded the main thoroughfares.



A rickshaw-van ferrying passengers in the city during yesterday's hartal hours. — Star photo

Hasina

From Page 1 Col 8

sion. BNP government will not also survive," she said.

The opposition leader said the government is pushing the country towards an inevitable state of confrontation taking steps to jeopardise democracy.

Hasina said police and the government's musclemen attacked and arrested many leaders and workers of Awami League and its front organisations during yesterday's "peaceful" hartal. She demanded their unconditional and immediate release.

Unholy design: Salam

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nouncing that they would not allow the government to live in peace even for a moment. "Under the garb of "save the Peasants and Save the Workers" slogans these parties were resorting to hartals, gheraos and terrorism to achieve their mean political design."

The people are of the view that such activities of these opposition parties are nothing but a conspiracy to trample all democratic processes and take political vengeance only to grab power in the shortest possible time. Their aggressive, unruly activities were the reflection of this unholy design, he observed.

Salam Talukder said despite repeated initiatives of the government to resolve the problems created out of the Sangsad boycott by the Opposition the later did not reciprocate. They did not even pay heed to the calls of different professional groups of the country, he said.

In this respect he referred to the appeal of the Leader of the House and formal meetings of the Deputy Leader of the House and said no reply of the letter given by the Deputy Leader of the House to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for holding formal discussions on any issue was received.

Besides, initiatives had been taken on behalf of the government at different times to hold discussions at both individual and collective levels. But the Opposition did not respond. Even when formal meetings were taking place between the government and the Opposition and the people were expecting that the Opposition would come forward with an open mind upholding the constitution, they announced the 'Dhaka Siege' programme by passing the issue, he said.

He blamed the Opposition for giving hartal call even before the 'Dhaka Siege' programme and later they gave programmes of subsequent hartals and indulged in the acts of throwing bombs and grenades and other destructive activities. This way they had disturbed the atmosphere of dialogue on one hand and insulted the public expectations on the other, he said.

The BNP Secretary General said the sacred pledge of the BNP government was to resolve all problems in the Sangsad elected by the people and "We are still pledge bound to implement it. But unfortunately efforts are being made to create chaos in the country by passing the Sangsad," he added.

Salam Talukder called upon all to solve the problems through discussions in the interest of maintaining the continuity of democracy and progress of the nation.

Nepali SC rejects plea to restore parliament

KATHMANDU, Sept 12: The Supreme Court Monday rejected a plea to reinstall Nepal's dissolved Parliament clearing the way for general elections on November 13, reports AP.

The Himalayan nation's first democratically elected parliament in three decades was dissolved on Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala's advice to the king after the government lost a crucial vote. King Birendra appointed Koirala as the caretaker leader until the elections.

Left-wing parties, which formed the main opposition in parliament, criticized the move saying they should be invited to form a government.

"The July 11 dissolution of the house of representatives cannot be labelled unconstitutional," said Chief Justice Bishwanath Upadhayaya who headed the 11-judge bench.

The petition, filed by a Communist member of the dissolved parliament and a former lawmaker of the ruling Nepali Congress party

Cairo confce to okay

From Page 1 Col 7

states led by the Vatican opposed it on religious and ethical grounds.

Meanwhile, delegates today agreed on wording for reproductive issues and decided that migrant workers do not have the right to bring their families to developed nations.

The issue of reproductive rights and health of Chapter 7 was second only to abortion in causing divisiveness among the delegates.

Responding to objections from the Vatican and some Roman Catholic countries, the phrase 'fertility regulation' — which they consider code words for abortion — was changed today to 'regulation of fertility.'

The family reunification issue, which divided rich and poor nations, was the last to be hammered out.

Developing countries wanted reunification to be a 'right,' enabling families to join migrant workers in developed nations.

The compromise — backed by Western nations concerned about rising immigration — said all governments "must recognise the vital importance of family reunification."

Before closing the conference, the Main Committee must also complete work on disputes over Chapters 1, 2, 10, and deal with what are described as minor issues remaining in Chapters 13, 14, and 15.

Chapters 1 and 2 are the programmes preamble and principles, Chapter 10 deals with national action, international cooperation and cooperation with non-governmental sector.

Abortion has been the most volatile and time-consuming topic at the conference, primarily because of the Vatican's rigid stance against it. Only after five days did delegates end their debate on the language that will appear in the plan of action, without winning Vatican approval.

The Programme of Action document is to set guidelines for the next 20 years for slowing the population explosion and encouraging Third World development.

The Cairo document, when approved, would be placed before the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) for discussion.

Even though it will not be considered a 'binding document' for the UN member states, the document is expected to accomplish three major things, analysts say.

It would legitimise the goals of the draft document, influence the developing countries' policies and keep pressure on major donors, they feel.

Editor : Mahfuz Anam

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Hartals to cost

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effect on the economy."

The continuing unrest will result in a loss of confidence among investors who will shy away. "This is true with regard to both foreign and local entrepreneurs," Rahman said and cautioned that uncertain conditions created by hartals would lead to "instability which is undesirable for our economy."

"I don't belong to any political party. I am saying this totally from the economic perspective," he said, suggesting that the politicians should begin to think about changing their ways and means of protest. "That is imperative for ensuring economic growth."

Rahman said the staggering unrest had shot the nation onto the spotlight of international media depicting Bangladesh as "a nation of political turmoil. We already have an image problem with floods, cyclones and natural disasters ... the on-again off-again strikes will add just another minus point."

In a statement, former President of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) M A Kashem urged the political leaders to take steps to come out of the present uneasy situation in the greater interest of the nation.

Meanwhile, as the country wallowed about in continuing political unrest, leaders of the four chambers on Sunday expressed concern over the situation and urged the politicians to resolve their differences through a meaningful dialogue.

Trade bodies concerned

From Page 1 Col 5

not only disrupt all forms of activities but give extremely ominous signal to potential investors both at home and abroad.

The leaders of the jute sector said "we are still facing great many problems particularly in relation to external competitiveness. We fear that any political disruptions which cause economic dislocation will set us back even further and will only help our competitor."

Over three crore people are directly or indirectly connected with jute. These hartals are, therefore, playing with the livelihood of those people, they added.

The statement said under the changed world economic scenario, "We feel that hartals will scare away potential investors from Bangladesh into our neighbouring nations."

In a press release, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association said hartals and transport strike have adversely affected the production and shipments.

"As a result, many factories will face cancellation of orders or will have to airfreight the finished products at their own cost giving rise to huge bank liability and bankruptcy," it said.

The association further said in view of the strike and hartal many garment buyers have started to divert their orders from Bangladesh to other countries.

The country and its economic development should be above everything, said the statement, "we urge all the political parties to settle political issues through negotiations... and to ensure uninterrupted production process by avoiding hartal and strike."

Former president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry Muhammad Abul Kashem urged the political leadership to take immediate steps to end the prevailing uneasy situation in the greater interest of the nation and the country.

Strikes and continued hartals were hindering production in mills and factories creating an economic crisis.

In a statement, he said these strikes and hartals would created an adverse reaction in the international arena about the country.

Kashem said export industries of Bangladesh would also suffer due to such situation.

BSS add from Chittagong: Leaders of the Bangladesh Master and Stevedores Association (BMSA) yesterday said that frequent hartal and siege programmes of political parties were crippling national economy and frustrating new initiative for industrialisation.

In a joint statement they said, hartal, transport strike, siege programme and labour unrest have been causing unaccountable loss to mills and factories.

They pointed out that these programmes were frightening foreign investors and thus country was deprived of much needed foreign investment.

The BMSA leader urged the opposition political parties to shun hartal and siege programme in the greater interest of the nation.

Kibria issues clarification

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina had no first hand or prior knowledge about the manner in which a British parliamentary delegation was invited or its expenditure borne, the party's advisory council member SAMS Kibria said in a clarification issued to the press yesterday.

The AL chief had claimed at a press conference held at the National Press Club Saturday afternoon that the government had brought the delegation at the cost of public money, to secure a certificate in favour of the ruling BNP.

Asked by Sheikh Hasina to provide a clarification "in order to dispel misunderstandings about her remarks," Kibria said, the AL chief had the "highest regard for the British parliament and the integrity of its distinguished members."

Referring to the reported remarks by some members of the British parliament who recently visited the country, Kibria said, "Much confusion has been created by some elements in the media" on the issue.

Terming this regrettable, Kibria also said, some quarters had made "attempts to make use of their (British MPs') conversation with different individuals for political gains."

Referring to a statement of the British High Commissioner Peter J Fowler, the AL advisory body member also noted that Fowler had clearly and correctly said that the British MPs did not make any 'official statements' on the political situation of Bangladesh.

Referring to certain newspaper reports about a telephone call made by US President Bill Clinton to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on September 9, Kibria, in his clarification, said he has had discussions with some senior officials of the American embassy on this point and they categorically told him that "President Clinton's call was in no way connected with the events of September 10 in Dhaka, or indeed, with the internal political situation in Bangladesh."

He said : "The President of the United States must not be dragged into our internal political controversies to serve the interest of the ruling party."

AL: Agitation

From Page 1 Col 4

will help institutionalise democracy and protect the people's right to franchise," he said, claiming that the demand had now become a national demand.

Amir Hossain Amu said, "despite repressive measures taken by the government," the people had observed hartal yesterday in five divisional headquarters including the capital.

Abdur Razzak said repression could not deter the followers of Bangabandhu. Rather, torture would inspire them to move ahead, he added.

Mayor Mohammad Hanif said, the AL did not take up the on-going programmes all of a sudden. The party had announced the outlines of a caretaker government and given the BNP leaders much time to accept the demand. But the government did not pay any heed to the AL's repeated calls for moving a Bill in Parliament on the caretaker issue, he added.

"We expected the government to make the Jatiya Sangsad effective by moving the caretaker government Bill", the mayor said. "But Begum Zia seems to be rigid on her position. I tell you (PM) we will not move even an inch from our position."

Hanif further said, the current AL-led agitation was aimed at institutionalising democracy and making the Jatiya Sangsad effective.

Admitting that hartals caused suffering to the people he said, Sheikh Hasina was forced to call strikes for the greater interest of the nation.

The rally was followed by a torch procession to drum up support for today's day-long countrywide hartal.

Jamaat

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Mohammad Mujahid, Sheikh Ansar Ali MP, Jasimuddin Sarkar and Mohammad Obaidullah.

Jamaat as well as two other major opposition parties — Awami League and Jatiya Party — observed a half-day hartal yesterday in the capital and four divisional headquarters.

Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid congratulated the people for observing the hartal and called upon the party activists to continue their support to make today nationwide hartal successful.

He said people would not leave the streets until their demands are met and warned that a greater movement would be launched after today's hartal if the government fails to pay heed to the opposition.

After the rally they also brought out a procession in support of today's (Tuesday's) hartal.

The Midnight File

Abiola's trial resumes

ABUJA, Sept 12: The treason trial of Nigerian opposition leader Moshood Abiola resumed today in the federal capital Abuja, but the judge soon ordered a new adjournment because the ailing politician was absent. Abuja police chief Mohammad Yusuf told the court that the Muslim millionaire had simply refused to attend the hearing, but Abiola's lawyers objected to this explanation and asked to be allowed to present a medical report, reports AFP.

DPRK may give inspectors wider access to N-sites

VIENNA, Austria, Sept 12: North Korea has indicated it is ready to give inspectors slightly wider access to its secretive nuclear facilities, the head of the UN nuclear watchdog agency said Monday. Hans Blix, director of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said an easing of restrictions on two inspectors in North Korea reflected "a recent positive development in its bilateral talks with the United States", reports AP.

Days of Benazir's govt numbered: Sharif

MULTAN (Pakistan), Sept 12: Pakistani opposition leader Nawaz Sharif, attracting big crowds on the second day of a protest rail journey, said today the days of prime minister Benazir Bhutto's government were numbered, reports Reuter.

"I'm going to give a call for the people to come to Islamabad to topple Benazir Bhutto," Sharif told 10,000 to 20,000 supporters in the city of Multan, in Punjab province. "This turn out shows that Benazir Bhutto cannot survive."

Sharif, leader of the main opposition Pakistan Muslim League (PML) party, set out on Sunday from Karachi on a whistle-stop tour of the country aimed at rallying popular support against Bhutto's 10-month-old government.

Sharif's self-styled "Caravan of deliverance" attracted modest crowds as his train rumbled overnight through market town in Sind province, regarded as Bhutto's power base.

But he won a more enthusiastic reception today in Punjab province, where support for the PML is stronger.

Asked how the expected to bring down Bhutto, whose coalition retains a majority in parliament, the former prime minister told reporters: "The public itself is in an agitational mood and wants to get rid of the Benzair government."

"The government has already been toppled by the people, but I cannot issue the notification," he said, referring to controversial powers vested in the president to dismiss the Prime Minister and dissolve the National Assembly.

Bhutto and president Farooq Leghari ignored Sharif's demand last month that they resign by September 11 or face a "train march" reminiscent of Bhutto's own "long march" of November 1992 which led to the removal of a Sharif government.

The prime minister says Sharif is now on a ride to nowhere.

She has dismissed his charges that her administration is corrupt and inept, saying he is merely trying to avoid charges of wrongdoing during his own previous 30-month government.

He has clearly stated he does not believe in the constitution so he wants to topple the government through unconstitutional means," Bhutto said of Sharif on Sunday.

DMC, IU closed

From Page 1 Col 7

intervened.

Police also searched the men's dormitory but no arms were recovered nor anybody was arrested.

Sources in both the students' organisations said there was simmering discontent in both camps over the issue for the past few days.. The leaders had tried to resolve the problem, but all talks failed.

Classes resumed in the college only August 13 after a one-and-a-half month closure following an armed clash between students and outsiders on June 26.

Meanwhile, our **Kushtia Correspondent** reports: The Islamic University (IU) was closed for an indefinite period yesterday.

An emergency syndicate meeting with Vice Chancellor Prof M A Hamid in the chair, which reviewed the campus situation, took the decision apprehending violence.

The university authorities also ordered the students to vacate their dormitories.

Earlier, eight students' organisations of the university including the JCD and the BCL had called a 72-hour strike on the campus from yesterday.

The eight organisations under the banner of the Syllabus Resistance Committee (SRC) are demanding exclusion of Islamic Studies from the syllabus of the new academic session.

Only the Jamaat-e-Islami's student wing, the Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS), is in favour of retaining the subject.

The Vice Chancellor held talks with the leaders of the SRC Sunday night which failed.

The VC told this correspondent that Islamic Studies was originally included in the syllabus as an additional subject but now it has been made a compuslory subject carrying 100 marks. He added that the subject would be taught in Bangla, not Arabic.

BCL(S-I) activists go on rampage in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, Sept 12: Chhatra League (S-I) activists went on the rampage in the city damaging vehicles and ransacking shops as police tried to arrest two local leaders today police said, reports UNB.

The BCL activists turned violent when police went to Andarkilla area of the city to arrest A Z M Nasir Uddin of Awami League and Khorshed Alam of Chhatra League at about 6:30 pm. They are wanted under several cases, police said.

The students damaged about 20 cars at Andarkilla, Momin Road, Nazir Ahmed Chowdhury Road and created panic in those areas by exploding hand-made bombs.

They fought pitched battles with police for about an hour and two Chhatra League activists named Dipul and Arif were arrested from the scene, witnesses said.

Haiti

From Page 1 Col 5

vasion of Haiti.

Besides, they have also reportedly asked for monitors to supervise an interim police force immediately after the invasion.

An official government handout issued yesterday said:

Bangladesh has decided to participate in the multinational force to be sent under UN Security Council Resolution Number 940 to Haiti to help in maintaining public safety and basic civil order after restoration of the legitimately elected government there.

The United States has welcomed the decision and expressed its thanks to the government of Bangladesh, with its considerable experience in UN-sponsored peacekeeping operations.

The principled decision of Bangladesh is based on its abiding commitment to fully support the United Nations and to uphold the cause of democracy and peace around the world, the announcement said.

Bangladesh observers and peace-keepers are at present working under the UN command in as many as 10 countries.

Indian will send

From Page 1 Col 4

India's decision to send troops to Haiti was conveyed to UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali during his recent visit to India, the spokesman said.

US led forces appear ready to invade the Caribbean island to topple the military government that ousted a democratically-elected administration in a coup.

The Delhi spokesman said Indian troops would be used in the "second phase" of the operation in Haiti "to assist the legitimate constitutional authorities in that country to establish an environment conducive to the organisations of the democratic process."

India already has 5,400 troops with the UN in Somalia and has promised men for a UN operation in Rwanda.

Cabinet okays

From Page 1 Col 7

ways to implement a long-term reform plan. The third proposal recommends handing over certain functions of both the PDB and the DESA — metre reading, bill collection and other similar operations — to private firms on contract basis.

The fourth point in the proposal relates to clearly identifying the areas of operation of the PDB, the DESA and the Palli Bidyuttayan Board.