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NEWS BRIEFS

Opposition leaders in JS meet today

Leaders of opposition parliamentary parties will meet at 7 pm today. The meeting is likely to discuss a letter sent by Deputy Leader of the House Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury to his Opposition counterpart Abdus Samad Azad recently, reports UNB.

Gas goes to Jamalpur today

Jamalpur district will be brought under gas distribution network today. Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is expected to formally inaugurate the distribution system at the district's Police Super maidan at 11:30 am, reports UNB.

Indonesia will send troops to Bosnia

JAKARTA, Sept 13: Indonesia will send 250 armed forces personnel, most of them medics, to war-torn Bosnia, the official Antara news agency said today. Armed Forces Chief of Staff Lieutenant-General Herman Mantiri was quoted as saying the team would leave for Bosnia on September 20 for a stay of about 12 months. Their stay could be extended, he added of the humanitarian mission, reports Reuter.

Juba Dal resistance fortnight

The Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal central committee will observe resistance fortnight from September 15-30 in different thanas and wards in the city and from September 20 to October 5 throughout the country against terrorism, anarchy and destroyers of democracy in the light of prevailing political situation, reports BSS.

Cairo confce okays 20-yr Programme of Action

From Masud Hasan Khan

CAIRO, Sept 13: World leaders at the UN population conference (ICPD) here today okayed a 20-year Programme of Action aimed at halting the growing global birthrates and revamping economic development.

The programme was adopted despite a partial rejection and reservations from around two dozen countries over abortion and sex. It, however, after nine days of tough negotiations ended with broadbased outlines for population control by including in it for the first time the context of economic development, environmental protection and empowerment of women.

Delegates from more than 180 countries adopted the programmes by consensus.

The Vatican, which led the fight to water down wording on sexual issues, announced it was joining the consensus on

certain parts of the document, a softening of its rejection of UN population documents in 1974 and 1984. But the Vatican delegate, Archbishop Renato Martino, said the Holy See could not support any sections 'recognising abortion as a dimension of population policy and primary health care.' He also rejected wording the Vatican reads as approving extra-marital sex.

The Cairo document was approved this afternoon during the Plenary Session of the ICPD amid clappings by the UN member states at the Cheops Hall of the Cairo International Conference Centre.

The plenary opened the draft document for discussion chapter-by-chapter. Those who disagreed registered their reservations or objections which mainly revolved round two hotly-debated chapters —

Chapters Seven and Eight.

Chapter Seven deals with reproductive rights and family planning while Chapter Eight deals with health, mortality and morbidity.

The main drafting committee of the UN Conference formally adopted the Programme of Action late Monday after more than a week of intense debate over wordings of the document.

The Committee raced through the final chapters of the Cairo Document after overcoming differences on some of the thorny issues like reproductive rights, family reunifications, adolescent sex education and international migration.

Muslim countries, including the host nation Egypt, criticised use of the word 'individuals' in a section on sexual activity. Muslims have argued this suggests approval

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73 pc Americans oppose invasion

WASHINGTON, Sept 13: Seventy-three per cent of the American people oppose an American invasion of Haiti, with six in 10 saying the country's vital interests are not at stake, an ABC News poll reports, says AP.

It finds also that President Clinton's disapproval rating "has stabilised at an awful but not disastrous 51 per cent". Only 46 per cent of 1,522 adults questioned in a random telephone sample from Thursday to Sunday approved of the way Clinton is doing his job.

ABC analyst Jeff Alderman said that while the results are not good news for the president "the spate of media poll stories about this president's precipitous fall from favour seem exaggerated."

Clinton's popularity historically has not risen above the mid-or high-50s — not far from his current standing, Alderman said.

US aircraft carriers head for Haiti

WASHINGTON, Sept 13: The aircraft carrier America will sail for Haiti immediately and the carrier Eisenhower will leave for the region Wednesday with US troops and helicopters to take part in an invasion of Haiti, defence officials said, reports Reuter.

The officials, who asked not to be identified, said the America would leave the US navy base at Norfolk, Virginia, early Tuesday afternoon. They refused to discuss its cargo, but those aboard were believed to include special troops who would take part in an initial thrust into Port-Au-Prince.

The Eisenhower, which has been loading attack and transport helicopters as well as troops from the US army's 10th Mountain Division for two days, will leave Norfolk Wednesday.

The United States already has at least 15 warships in the Caribbean and the Clinton administration has repeatedly warned Haiti's military leaders that an invasion is approaching unless they step aside for the

return of deposed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Another report from Ceiba, Puerto Rico says, the first contingent of a multinational peacekeeping force for Haiti marched off the tarmac of a US military base in Puerto Rico on Monday night, ready for at least two weeks of training.

Jamaican soldiers carrying AK-47 automatic weapons led the 150-member contingent.

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which also included unarmed soldiers from Belize and Antigua and Barbuda. The troops were greeted by elite US troops, some of them fluent in Haitian Creole, from the 3rd US Army Special Forces group, based in Fort Bragg, NC.

The arrival of the Caribbean troops came hours after 1,300 US Marines wrapped up six days of military exercises at the vast Roosevelt Roads Naval Station in eastern Puerto Rico.

The Caribbean units represented the first of some 17 nations that have committed to

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AL, JP, Jamaat call road-rail barricade Sept 27

By Staff Correspondent

The three major opposition parties agitating against the government yesterday announced plans for a road and railway barricade across the country on September 27.

The Awami League, the Jatiya Party and the Jamaat, addressing post-hartal press conferences in the city, made simultaneous announcements of their next course of action.

Yesterday's dawn-to-dusk hartal was the last in a series of such general strikes which started with the Dhaka Siege on September 10.

Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina declared the programme at a crowded press conference at her Minto Road residence.

The Jatiya Party's acting chairman Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, and Jamaat-e-Islami leader Maulana Matur Rahman Nizami announced similar programmes at separate press briefings in their respective offices at the Sangsad Bhavan.

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BNP plans to demonstrate its strength

By Asiuzzaman

As the major opposition parties continue to press with their anti-government campaign, the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) plans its own programmes designed to demonstrate its strength.

The BNP standing committee, at a meeting yesterday with party chief and Prime Minister in the chair, decided on a series of programmes to counter the Opposition's posturing.

Beginning September 16, party stalwarts will undertake meet-the-people tours, addressing rallies and leading processions across the country. These will culminate party chief Begum Khaleda Zia addressing a "grand rally" at the Manik Mia Avenue in the capital on October 2.

Besides, achievements of

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Caretaker govt now a popular demand: JP

The Jatiya Party (JP) yesterday urged the government to accept the demand for a caretaker government, saying that it is the demand of the majority people, reports UNB.

JP acting Chairman Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury MP, addressing a press conference at the end of four days of identical programmes of the Opposition, said that by observing the programmes the people had once again expressed their support for the future polls to be held under a caretaker administration.

Congratulating the people for taking part in the four day programmes, Mizan announced a fresh 11-day programme beginning September 18.

The JP's agitation programme, similar to that of the Awami League and Jamaat-e-Islami, include mass campaign from September 18-26 and a countrywide 'rail-road blockade' on September 27.

On September 28, the JP will hold a grand rally in the capital to announce its next course of fresh action programme.

The press conference at the Sangsad Bhavan was also attended by Maudud Ahmed MP, Kazi Zafar Ahmed MP, Anwar

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3 die as launch sinks following engine blast

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Sept 13: Three security personnel were killed in a launch capsized that took place in the Rangamati lake on Sunday, a delayed report said here today.

The mishap occurred when a launch carrying some security personnel from Rangamati to Subalung sank after a sudden explosion in the engine. The accident happened near 15 miles off Rangamati, sources said.

Law enforcing agency sources said bodies of three persons were later recovered. The rest of the passengers swam to the shore, the sources added.

Countrywide hartal observed

Star Report

A dawn-to-dusk country-wide hartal, called by three major opposition parties, was observed yesterday leaving scores of people injured in sporadic clashes in the capital and elsewhere in the country.

Police arrested 35 persons from different parts of the city for their alleged involvement in the clashes and picketing during the hartal.

Yesterday's shutdown was part of a series of hartals since Sunday to protest 'police atrocities' during 'Dhaka Siege' programme Saturday and to press home the demand for holding general elections under a caretaker government.

The Awami League, the Jatiya Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami — who have been boycotting Parliament sessions since March to realise the demand — called the hartals separately.

Reports reaching Dhaka

from the districts said that the day-long hartal was observed by and large peacefully, barring stray incidents of violence in which some people sustained injuries.

In the capital, five persons including one police constable were injured in clashes at Jurain between the supporters and the opponents of the hartal.

The clashes broke out at 11 am, when JCD activists tried to bring out two minibuses on the road and Awami League, BCL and Jubo League workers tried to resist them.

During the clashes, rickshawpuller Ruhul Anin and passers by Delwar Hossain and Yusuf were injured when hit by brick bats. One Jubo League activist, Babul, received a bullet injury in his leg.

Police constable Shaheed was injured while trying to disperse the mob.

At around 1 pm, a group of armed opponents of the hartal stabbed BCL Motijheel thana President Mehdi Hasan Shawkat in his neck near the T and T College.

Witnesses said, the BCL leader was sitting beside the main road after participating in a procession when the hartal opponents attacked him and took him to the college premises. The group stabbed him and left him there. He was later admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

In day-long clashes between JCD and BCL activists in Mirpur, General Secretary of Bangla College JCD unit Tarek Iqbal was seriously injured at around 12 noon near the Section 1 crossing.

Witnesses said, the BCL activists attacked a procession of the JCD led by Tarek at the Section 1 crossing. During the

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These youngsters take a joy ride through the middle of an otherwise busy thoroughfare in the city during yesterday's day-long hartal. — Star photo

Hartals erode business morale, says BEA

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh Employers' Association (BEA) has reacted sharply to the Opposition's hartal programme and said it has shaken the morale and confidence of the business community.

"The BEA urges the political parties to take a dispassionate stock of how much the hartals cost the national economy before announcing any similar action programme in future," the BEA said in a statement yesterday.

"By contacting over 50 industries of different sizes in Dhaka and Chittagong, financial institutions and shops, the association found that the business community is worried over the manner the economy has been ignored," said the statement signed by BEA president Laila Kabir.

"There is a consensus that instead of organising hartals, the political parties must find new methods of ventilating their protests," the BEA observed.

The BEA survey said the businessmen feel that the political parties should again emphasise their political commitment to economic progress so as to help improve the business climate and morale of the investors.

"The business firms pointed out the grim struggle the country's trade and industry is faced with for their survival," the statement said.

The business community also resented that instead of coming forward to contribute to socio-economic stability, the parties have created uncertainties in the country, the BEA said.

The businessmen found it encouraging that the general people are becoming increasingly conscious that discipline and hard work are necessary to improve the economy, the BEA survey noted.

"The same recognition is also visible in the attitude of the workers who, despite serious problems of transport and lack of security, turned up in increasing numbers in mills and factories on the hartal days," the statement said.

"The businessmen feel that it creates the hope that the day is not very far off when hartals will be discarded," BEA said.

The question in their mind is whether the economy will survive till that time."

Main Opposition backs sending troops to Haiti

By Nurul Kabir

The mainstream opposition parties support the government's decision to participate in the UN-sponsored multinational force for Haiti.

The Left-leaning parties, however, find the action violative of the Constitution. Although supporting the decision in principle, the major parties felt that the government should have consulted them on the issue.

The Awami League (AL)'s secretary for international affairs Abul Hassan Chowdhury, MP, told The Daily Star last night, "We support any UN initiative to help restore democracy in any part of the world. Therefore, we do not find anything wrong with the government decision to send troops to Haiti under a UN resolution." The AL leader, however, regretted that the government did not consult the Opposition on the issue.

"We expected the Prime Minister to consult the leader of the Opposition in Parliament prior to taking such a decision."

Acting chairman of the Jatiya Party Mizanur Rahman

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I am under constant watch: Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday alleged that she was under constant surveillance by intelligence agencies.

"I am under constant watch. My telephone is being bugged and letters are censored," Hasina told reporters at a press conference at her official residence.

"What kind of democracy is this government practising where the Leader of the Opposition is under surveillance?" she asked.

She said, she had lodged a complaint in Parliament against censoring of her letters

"But no action was taken."

People to settle the issue on the streets, Jamaat warns govt

Jamaat Secretary General Maulana Matur Rahman Nizami yesterday urged the government to resolve the political crisis by initiating a bill in Parliament providing for a caretaker government, reports UNB.

"Let the government bring a caretaker government bill in Parliament. Dialogue can be held on the modality of the bill," Nizami told a press briefing at the Sangsad Bhavan in the evening.

Announcing his party's next course of action in case the government failed to meet the demand, the Jamaat leader said the programme includes rail-road blockade on September 27. He warned that the issue would be settled by the people on the street.

"There is no scope of chatting in the name of dialogue," he said, "the agitation will take its own course towards the logical end if the demand is not met."

He said the issue of a caretaker government is a subject of Parliament. But the government pushed the Opposition to the streets without resolving it in Parliament.

Nizami said the demand for a caretaker government should

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Hasina calls for all-out non-cooperation

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday announced a series of agitation programmes, including a country-wide road and railway barricade on September 27.

The programmes also include a mass-contact campaign across the country from September 18 to 26 during which she would make two separate train journeys from Khulna to Sreepur and from Dhaka to Chittagong.

The next course of action would be announced at a public rally on September 28.

Announcing the programmes at a crowded press conference at her official Minto Road residence Sheikh Hasina urged the people to join the anti-government agitation to force the ruling party to accept the demand for a caretaker government for holding national elections.

"I urge the people to launch an all-out non-cooperation movement against this corrupt government," Hasina told newsmen at the press conference called after the day-long hartal.

Accusing the government of being corrupt and intransigent, the Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament said, "If the government accepts the demand then the people's suffering caused by hartals would end."

She said the people's suffering had multiplied because of the government's 'intransigence' which also forced the opposition parties to take to the streets.

She alleged that the government has assumed a 'fascist' character to suppress the Opposition programmes which started from September 10.

"They even called a transport strike to disrupt the Dhaka Siege programme," she said, adding, "Despite all these, our programmes were successful."

She criticised those who were talking of economic losses because of the Opposition's programmes especially hartals.

Quoting from a number of newspaper stories alleging "corruption and financial embezzlement," she urged those who made anti-hartal statements to count the losses due

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Grameen Bank to float Tk 650 cr bonds

By Inam Ahmed

The Grameen Bank (GB) will float Taka 650 crore bonds for subscription by scheduled banks in a bid to meet its fund demand for expanding lending activities from domestic sources.

The bonds for three to 10 years bearing four to six per cent interest is likely to be floated for subscription by the end of this month, according to Finance Ministry sources and GB officials.

The bonds, guaranteed by the government, will be transferable in nature, and a consortium of the nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) will subscribe them, officials said.

In a situation where the commercial banks are loaded with excess liquidity, the

bonds will be a relief for them because they will be able to invest in interest accruing instruments.

The GB, which solely operates among the rural poor, had so far been dependent for its credit programmes on funds from different donors.

But it is not receiving any funds from them since 1992, GB sources said.

"There is a huge demand for investible funds as about 60 per cent of the older Grameen borrowers have surpassed the poverty line and aspire for bigger investments," Managing Director of the GB Khaled Shams said. "Moreover, the number of new borrowers have also increased for which we

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