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**NEWS BRIEFS**

**BNP's programmes**

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has taken a massive programme of holding meetings and rallies throughout the country for maintaining prevailing democratic political process and developmental activities. Under the programme Chairperson of the BNP and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will address public meetings at Sylhet Madrasah ground on September 24, in Khulna on September 25, in Chittagong on September 28 and at Manik Mia Avenue, Dhaka on October 1, reports BSS.

**Rly ferry services suspended**

SIRAJGANJ, Sept 17: Railway ferry services between Sirajganj and Jagannathganj ghat will be closed from today due to fall of water level of the river Jamuna. Railway officials said the ferry services would remain suspended till further notice as 'char' emerged near both Sirajganj and Jagannathganj terminals due to fall of the water level of the river, reports UNB.

**Ceasefire in Tajikistan**

TEHRAN, Sept 17: The Tajik government and Islamic opposition today reached a provisional ceasefire agreement. UN special envoy Ramiro Pizarro-Ballon said here. The accord would come into force when UN military observers arrived in Tajikistan in eight to 10 days time. Pizarro-Ballon said on the fifth day of UN-sponsored talks in Tehran, reports AFP.

**Philosopher Karl Popper dead**

LONDON, Sept 17: Sir Karl Popper, one of the 20th century's most respected philosophers, died aged 92 in a hospital in south London today after a long illness. The Austrian-born Thinker's views on liberty had a profound impact on contemporary political ideas, reports Reuters.

## Haitians flee in fear of invasion Carter heads last bid to avert use of force

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Sept 17: Hundreds of Haitians fled the city in buses and trucks Saturday in anticipation of a US invasion. A plane buzzed the Haitian capital hours earlier, and witnesses

leaders to fight any American intervention. It came hours before former President Jimmy Carter arrived in Haiti Saturday to lead a last-minute effort to avert bloodshed.

The other members of the Senate Armed Services Committee. A US administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the delegation's discussions would occur on a short timetable and that prospects of military action "remain a matter of days."

**WASHINGTON, Sept 17: The State Department warned Americans today to watch out for demonstrations or other anti-US actions in response to the Haitian crisis, and said some embassies had received bomb threats. It said the US vow to use force if necessary to remove Haiti's junta may produce "public demonstrations, other manifestations of opinion regarding the US role in Haiti and or threats or attacks against US interests," reports AFP.**

said shots were fired at the aircraft, reports AP. The exodus followed pledges by Haiti's military

delegation are retired General Colin Powell, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Senator Sam Nunn, chairman

of the Senate Armed Services Committee. A US administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the delegation's discussions would occur on a short timetable and that prospects of military action "remain a matter of days."

The operational side of this is moving ahead," Boxx said. "The gun is cocked."

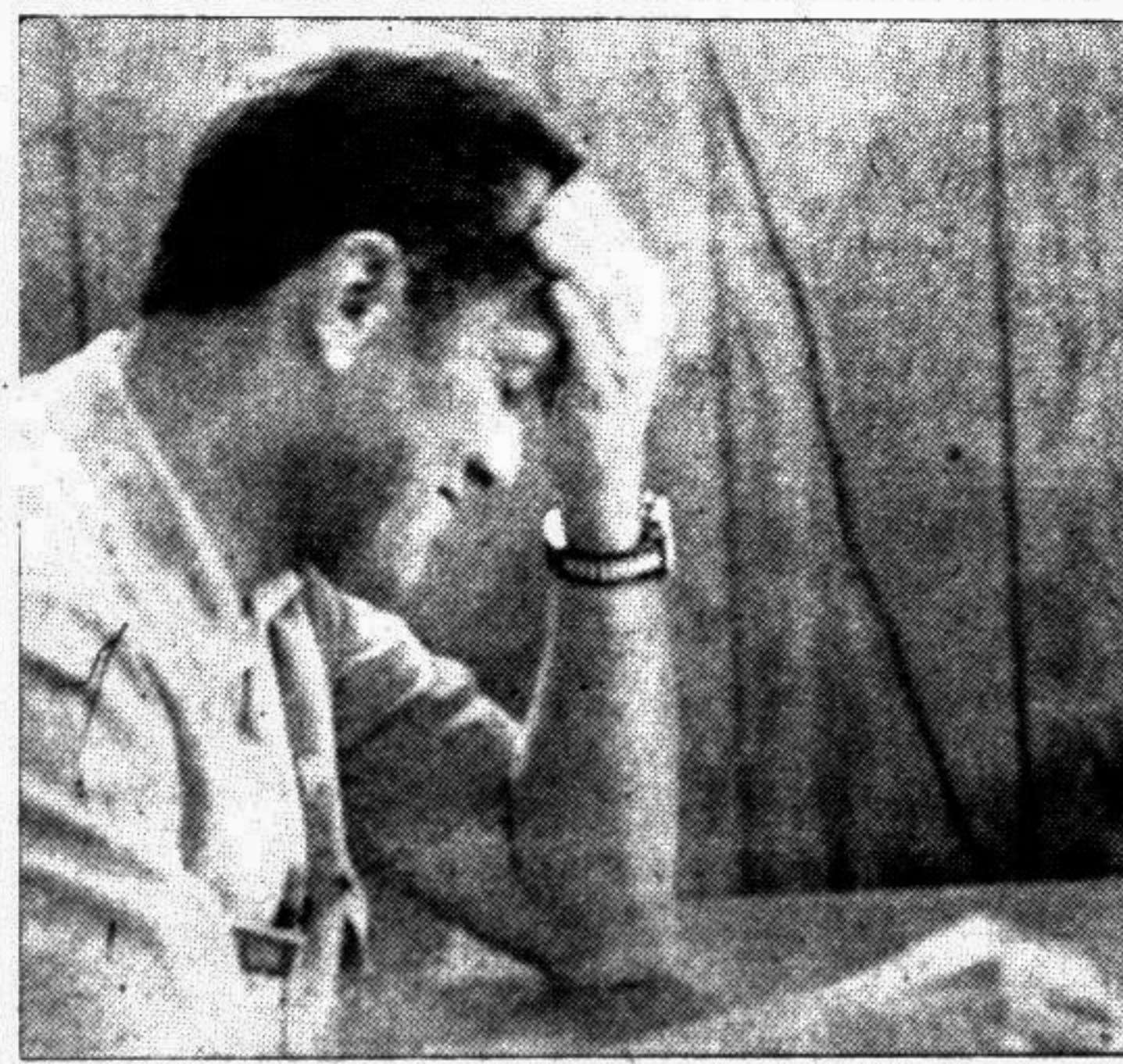
Clinton last week authorized an offer to spirit the ruling junta out of the country and ensure them transportation to another country, visas and help in getting their assets from frozen bank accounts.

The delegation arrived hours after the Port-au-Prince international airport's runways were cleared of 55-gallon (209-liter) barrels placed on there to prevent airborne invasion forces.

There was little sign of feverish activity in advance of the mission, though there was a step-up in security as plainclothes police carrying automatic weapons patrolled the area.

Haitians scrambled to board pickups, trucks and buses for the countryside Saturday morning. Bus stops near Port-au-Prince's waterfront were jammed with people carrying whatever possessions they had.

Wives and children of several prominent coup supporters, including capital Police Chief Joseph Michel Francois, have fled Haiti in recent days over the overland border to



In this photo provided by the television network CBS, Haitian military leader Gen Raoul Cedras prepares for an interview Thursday in Port-au-Prince. Cedras said during the interview that he had been given the order to defend Haiti if the US invades. — AFP photo

## Govt to place bill in JS to protect consumers' rights

By Staff Correspondent

Commerce Minister M Shamsul Islam yesterday said that the government would move a bill in Parliament seeking protection of Consumers' interests.

"The law will aim at protecting consumers' rights against adulteration, low quality goods, exorbitant prices, harmful products, improper weighing and similar problems," the minister said at a seminar on "Protection of consumers' interests" in the city.

"We all are consumers. Yet we are very weak as regards realisation of consumers'

rights," the minister told the seminar organised by the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) in cooperation with the Commerce Ministry and the Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB).

Prof. Dr Anwar Hossain of the IBA, Dhaka University, presented the keynote paper. The minister stressed the importance of consumers' awareness of their rights and sought the views of all quarters regarding formulation and implementation of the said bill.

The seminar was also addressed by Prof. Dr Anwar Hossain. — See Page 12 Col 6

## Road barricade in Khagrachhari continues

KHAGRACHHARI, Sept 17: Road communications in the district remained disrupted for the second consecutive day today as supporters of a peasants' organisation enforced a 72-hour blockade programme, reports UNB.

Police arrested six people — three from Dighinala and three from Matiranga thana — for violating the Section 144.

The Bangali Krishak Samik Kalyan Parishad, a cluster village-based organisation, had called for the blockade from Friday to protest a clash between police and its supporters at Matiranga that left two

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## Three Bangladeshis among 8 UN troops released in Liberia

ABIDJAN, Sept 17: Eight of 18 UN soldiers held by one of Liberia's warring factions were released early today and turned up in neighbouring Ivory Coast near Danane, 500 kilometres northwest of Abidjan, a reliable diplomatic source disclosed, reports AFP.

The men — three Bangladeshis, two Uruguayans, a Pakistani, an Austrian and an Indian — were in good health and did not appear to have been maltreated, the source said.

## Door is open for dialogue, says Huda

Information Minister Nazmul Huda yesterday said he was hopeful that the opposition response to the question of dialogue would be positive, reports BSS.

The Information Minister also said that the government had not closed the door for discussion and that the BNP chairperson and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia had already authorised three top party leaders to initiate the dialogue to arrive at a solution.

In an interview with the Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS), Nazmul Huda said "Apart from other BNP leaders, our leader Begum Khaleda Zia herself had made several personal appeals to the opposition, urging them to come to Parliament and hold discussion to resolve the crisis."

Continuing, he said that Parliament is the forum for such dialogue.



A sequence from the 'Battle of Bangladesh,' a dance drama based on the War of Liberation, staged at the Shilpakala Academy auditorium in the city yesterday evening as part of the 13th founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Ballet Troupe. — Star photo

## PM apprised of Samad Azad's letter

By Staff Correspondent

Deputy Leader of Parliament Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday apprised Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia of the Opposition views on the proposed dialogue to end the present political impasse, sources concerned said.

The opposition parties' stand on the issue was communicated to the Deputy Leader of the House by Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad in a letter Friday.

Prof Chowdhury informed the BNP chief and Prime Minister the contents of the letter at a meeting of senior

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## CU students ransack Rly property : 20 hurt

CHITTAGONG, Sept 17:

The train was carrying students to Chittagong University. Nobody was injured in the derailment, railway sources and police said.

But, after the accident, the students ransacked the Sholashahar junction office and set it on fire.

Four fire-fighting vehicles went to the spot and brought the blaze under control after an hour at 11 am. Railway police put damage in the arson at about Taka 25 lakh.

Later, the unruly students rushed to the CRB office and attacked it with brick-bats and other lethal weapons, police

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## Jt meet decides to free DU campus from violence

By Staff Correspondent

In a bid to improve the academic atmosphere on the Dhaka University campus, a joint meeting of the vice-chancellor and the leaders of different student organisations yesterday decided to take action against terrorists irrespective of their party affiliation.

In a unanimous nine-point resolution, the meeting said the student organisations would not give shelter to any terrorists and would help the authorities apprehend and take action against the terrorists.

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## 'Amended Act to affect the landless'

By Staff Correspondent

Speakers at a seminar in the city Saturday said the recent amendment to the State Acquisition and Tenancy Act should not be implemented, because, "it will affect the landless people."

The seminar on 'Land Laws, Empowerment of Rural Poor and Structural Reform' was organised by the Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD) at the Bangladesh Management Development Centre.

Presided over by M Saidur Rahman, Chairman of the ALRD it was addressed by M Shamsuddoha, MP, ADAB Chairperson Khushi Kabir, Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman and Rasheda K Chowdhury of ADAB.

The speakers observed that the amendment would create "instability and chaos" in the coastal areas. The beneficiaries of 'khash land' may also be subjected to persecution and harassment because of the amendment, they said.

They, however, suggested that the government should exchange views with all concerned before implementing the amendment.

The amendment to the State Acquisition and Tenancy Act was passed in the last budget session of parliament. Under this law, the local administration has been given

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## C'wealth Secy Gen's plan for smooth voting

Commonwealth Secretary General Chief Emeke Anyaoku believes free and fair elections are possible under the present administration in Bangladesh and offered yesterday a set of suggestions for ensuring smooth voting, reports UNB.

The three-point measures are: further strengthening of the Election Commission; formulation of an election code of conduct for all political parties; and permission for a Commonwealth observers' team to oversee future polls.

The visiting C'wealth Secretary General's suggestions came when he made a courtesy call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office.

The Commonwealth thinks that the 1991 elections were free and fair. We (C'wealth observation team) had observed the election. So, I think free and fair election is possible under the present administration," said Chief Anyaoku.

If necessary, he said, the observers' team can arrive here about a month ahead of the elections for observation.

Chief Anyaoku said the present legitimate and representative government of Bangladesh had been established through a free and fair election.

He expressed his concern over the current political situation.

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The visiting Commonwealth Secretary General Chief Emeke Anyaoku paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office in the city yesterday. —PID photo

## Taslina to attend confce on persecuted writers

OSLO (Norway), Sept 17: Several persecuted writers, including Bangladesh's Taslima Nasrin, are expected next week at a conference devoted to their plight and free speech, reports AP.

Others will miss the event. They are in prison for speaking their minds.

The Norwegian Writers Union called the two-day event in the west coast town of Stavanger to focus on seven persecuted writers, including Nasrin, who fled to Sweden from death threats in Bangladesh last month.

They also will discuss British-Indian author Salman Rushdie, although there was confirmation he would attend.

Through these, we hope to draw attention to the at least 700 writers in the world who are being persecuted by their countries governments, or threatened by others," said union chairman Thorvald Steen at a news conference.

Steen said Nasrin plans to attend the Symposium on Freedom of Expression, which opens Wednesday and is expected to draw about 300 people.

Rushdie has lived in hiding since 1989, when Iran's theocrats declared his book 'The Satanic Verses' blasphemous against Islam and ordered his death. He has frequently turned up unannounced in Scandinavia.

"It is just as exciting every time to see whether he pops up or not," Steen said.

Nasrin was threatened by Islamic fundamentalists in her homeland in Bangladesh. She

## Draft National Forest Policy finalised

By Chapal Bashar

The draft of the National Forest Policy, 1994, has been finalised and will be placed before the Cabinet soon for approval.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests has prepared the draft proposing amendments to the existing forest policy, adopted in 1979.

The 15-year-old forest policy has been scrutinised in detail and revised drastically to meet present day needs," said an official source. "The 1979 policy is a sketchy one — it deserves radical changes providing specific measures to save and expand our forest resources."

The draft-policy was formulated in the light of the recommendations contained in the documents prepared recently for the 20-year master

plan for afforestation. The main objective of the draft policy is to step up afforestation both in the public and the private sectors and to bring the country's 20 per cent land area under forest coverage by 2015.

Presently, forests cover around eight per cent of the land area while the requirement is 25 per cent for maintaining ecological balance.

To achieve this objective, the draft policy provided detailed guidelines along with necessary pre-conditions for the development of the forest resources sector.

It stressed government's continued political commitment for a long-term programme like afforestation. Involvement of the people was

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## Presidential polls in Lanka Nov 9

COLOMBO, Sept 17: Sri Lanka's presidential election will be held on November 9, the state-run Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation said today, reports Reuters.

The election commissioner has called for nominations on October 7, it said.

Sri Lanka's new Prime Minister, Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, is expected to be the presidential candidate of the People's Alliance (PA), which won last month's general election by a narrow margin.

The United National Party, the former ruling party, which held power for 17 years, has already named opposition leader and former government minister Gamini Dissanayake as its candidate.

The new government has said it plans to scrap the executive presidency, as part of a package of constitutional reforms by the latter part of next year.