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NEWS BRIEFS

DUTA concerned

By Staff Correspondent The Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA) yesterday expressed profound shock and concern at the killing of a student, Sarwar Hossain Mithu, on the DU campus on September 22. The DUTA president, Prof Shahadat Ali and the general secretary, Dr AAMS Arefin Siddique, in a statement said, such killings were taking place one after another as "the government and the university administration had not taken action against the armed terrorists".

Medicine seized at ZIA

By Staff Correspondent A customs surveillance team seized contraband medicine worth about Taka 13 lakh at Zia International Airport (ZIA) yesterday afternoon. The medicine, hidden in four handbags, brought from Karachi by BG-032 flight. None was arrested.

Saifur leaves for Madrid today

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman leaves Dhaka today to attend the 50th founding anniversary of World Bank and IMF in the Spanish capital of Madrid. Rahman, the current Chairman of the Board of Governors of World Bank and IMF, will also preside over the annual meeting of the two institutions, reports UNB.

LDF condemns attack on AL meetings

By Staff Correspondent The Left Democratic Front (LDF) in a statement yesterday strongly condemned the attack on the Awami League's public meetings in Ishurdi and Natore.

Train mishap kills 70 in Angola

LUANDA, Sept 24: A train was derailed in Tulunda town in Huila province, southwestern Angola, on Thursday, killing at least 70 people and injuring 70 others. A team of experts has arrived at the spots of the accident to investigate the cause, and the loss caused by the accident is still under investigation, reports Xinhua.

# Sylhet becomes 6th admin division

SYLHET, Sept 24: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, fulfilling a long-cherished aspiration of the Sylhetis, today declared Sylhet as the country's sixth administrative division comprising Sylhet, Moulvibazar, Habiganj and Sunamganj districts, reports UNB.

"Today, I declare Sylhet a division, the longstanding demand of the people of (greater) Sylhet", she told a huge public meeting at the local Alia Madrassah ground amidst thunderous applause. Tens of thousands of people, including women and children, from far flung areas

of greater Sylhet converged at the madrassah ground since early afternoon to hear the Prime Minister make the announcement.

There are nearly 10 million people in the four districts of the new division which brings the highest amount of foreign exchange to the country in the form of remittances sent by its people living abroad, particularly in the United Kingdom.

Immediately after the assumption of office by the present BNP government, the people of Barisal and Sylhet intensified their campaign for separate divisions. The government announced

Barisal as the country's fifth division early last year.

Sources said the government is also planning to set up a few more administrative divisions in the near future.

Addressing the mammoth gathering, Begum Zia said the BNP's politics is for development, production and welfare of the people. "The country at present is witnessing a development spree", she added.

"The BNP has always worked for the socio-economic emancipation of the people", she said and listed different development programmes of her government in the agricultural sector.

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Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing public meeting at Madrassah Maidan in Sylhet yesterday. — PID photo

# Plague fear grips India

SURAT, India, Sept 24: As more patients with symptoms of plague thronged an overcrowded hospital Saturday, officials declared Surat a disaster zone after the death toll rose to 51, reports AP.

Authorities ordered pharmacies to give free antibiotics to anyone with symptoms of plague after residents mobbed drug stores, forcing police to guard the delivery of new supplies.

Some 400,000 residents

have fled the western town of Surat since the first deaths from pneumonic plague were reported this week, raising fears they could spread the disease to India's large cities, Press Trust of India news agency reported.

The disease is a more deadly strain of the bubonic plague, or "Black Death," that ravaged 14th-century Europe.

On Saturday, seven more people died in Surat's civil hospital, which was treating

only plague patients.

One hundred and fourteen more patients registered Saturday, the city's municipal control room said. The hospital now has 359 cases of plague.

Patients groaned on the floor of the various wards and even corridors of the civil hospital where doctors wearing face-masks treated them with antibiotics.

Thousands of people con-

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The body of a plague victim is brought to the New Civil Hospital in Surat Friday. Several Indian cities are on alert against a possible plague epidemic as thousands flee this western city in an exodus sparked by the disease that left up to 100 people dead. — AFP photo

# Docs place conditions for talks

The Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) yesterday put forward certain preconditions for talks with the government to end the ongoing strike by doctors at the state-run hospitals and health complexes.

Addressing a press conference at the association's office in the city, the BMA leaders questioned the health minister's sincerity about his offer of a dialogue; however, they left the door open for talks with the government if a number of preconditions are met.

The ongoing agitation of the BMA will not stop until appropriate government orders are issued to implement our 21-point demand," said Dr Gazi Abdul Huq, general secretary of the association. Health Minister Choudhury Kamal Hne Yusuf's recent offer for talks, he said, was made only to mislead the physician community and the people at large.

The minister made the offer for talks with the BMA

through journalists and, at the same time, he urged the journalists to build up public opinion against the doctors," he said. "This makes his intentions clear."

"The BMA, he maintained, has always attempted to arrive at a solution through negotiations and its leaders met government officials on 25 occasions during the past 30 months. An agreement was also signed between the two

## Strike passes fourth day

By Staff Correspondent

More patients left government hospitals and health complexes and the number of patients increased further at private clinics across the country as the doctors' strike continued for the fourth day yesterday.

Poor patients, however, continued to go to the government hospitals since they

sides during the doctors' strike in January last, he noted.

"Before any further talks we have to know how much of that accord has been implemented," Dr Huq said, while providing a detailed outline of the 21-point demand and the prevailing situation.

The BMA general secretary did not, however, brush aside any possibility of talks with the government but outlined certain conditions to create a 'favourable' climate for talks.

These include removal of the Health Secretary and cancellation of the government orders relating to setting up of the vigilance team and suspensions of some doctors at the Tongi and Gazipur hospitals.

"We don't think that a congenial atmosphere can be created for the talks unless these steps are taken," he added.

Replying to a question, BMA president Dr M A Majed also did not rule out negotiations

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# UN eases sanctions against Y'slavia

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 24: The Security Council on Friday eased sanctions against Yugoslavia to reward it for shutting its border with Serbia and parts of Bosnia and imposed restrictions on Bosnian Serbs for rejecting a peace plan, reports AP.

A third resolution, condemning Bosnian Serb ethnic purges against Muslim civilians, was also approved.

The vote on the 15-nation council to ease sanctions was 11-2, with 2 abstentions. The 'no' votes were cast by Djibouti and Pakistan, the abstentions by Nigeria and Rwanda. The vote on tightening sanctions was 14-0, with one abstention

by China. The vote to condemn ethnic purges was unanimous.

The United Nations eased sanctions because Serbia, the dominant member of Yugoslavia, permitted border monitors to ensure that it has sealed its frontier to all but humanitarian aid and was no longer arming the Bosnian Serbs.

The resolution will not lift the full trade embargo against Belgrade, but will suspend certain sanctions for 100 days. It will permit resumption of civilian air traffic from Belgrade, the reopening of a river port and the resumption of international sporting and cultural contacts.

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# Section of polytech teachers to defy strike

Bangladesh Polytechnic Teachers' Parishad members decided to attend classes immediately despite a strike called by their colleagues, reports UNB.

The decision was announced when a 30-member delegation of the BPTT called on Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar at his office in Dhaka yesterday.

The meeting, an official handout said, discussed matters relating to an 11-point demand, including service structure, submitted by the Parishad and increment of pay for the higher qualified teachers.

It took note that introduc-

# Maintenance of DC-10s

## Fresh tender invited

By Staff Correspondent Biman Bangladesh Airlines has invited fresh tender for awarding maintenance contract for its four DC-10-30 aircraft. It cancelled all the 13 bids in response to a previous tender for this, Biman sources said.

There were some anomalies between the tender notice and the tender schedule in the previous tender forcing the authorities to invite fresh bids," a Biman source told The Daily Star.

"Moreover, only one of the 13 firms was qualified in the technical evaluation," the source said on condition of anonymity.

When contacted over telephone, Director (engineering) of the Biman said "We did not get sufficient number of qualified bidders, so we decided to go for retender." He declined to elaborate.

The Rome-based Alitalia is now the maintenance contractor for Biman and a three-year contract with the Italian airlines ends in December. October 31 is the last date of submitting fresh bids.

Biman officials hoped that they would be able to sign a fresh contract by November after completing all the formalities.

The 13 firms whose bids were rejected are: MS Aerotech, Commodore Aviation, MTU, Swiss Air, Allied Signal, Sabena, Dowty, Alitalia, AAR, UNC International, Canadian Service, AOM Industries and Carbe Aviation.

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# Human rights body to sue BMA

The Bangladesh Human Rights Commission plans to file a damage suit against the Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) for its enforcement of the current doctors' strike across the country, reports UNB.

The BHRC has also decided to sue the concerned doctors on behalf of relatives of the patients who died due to lack of medicare because of the strike.

The relatives of such strike victims have been requested to send their complaints to the commission office at 278, Gulbagh, Malibagh, Dhaka. The BHRC also offered free legal advice to the affected people.

In a statement yesterday, BHRC president Kazi Abdur Razzak said the medical profession is an emergency service and there is also a humanitarian aspect to it.

"The state spends lakhs of taka to rear a doctor... but they remain occupied with their personal affairs in the clinics although they draw salaries

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# BNP govt must quit soon, demands Zillur

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League (AL) General Secretary Zillur Rahman yesterday said that the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) had no moral right to stay in power and demanded immediate resignation of the government.

The AL leader was addressing a press conference called at the Jatiya Press Club to give, what he said, the party's reaction to the incident in which a train carrying the Opposition Leader of Parliament Sheikh Hasina was allegedly attacked in the northern region of the country Friday.

Terming the reported incidents at Natore and Ishurdi heinous, Zillur Rahman alleged "it was nothing but an assassination attempt on the AL chief, masterminded by the

highest quarter of the present administration."

Zillur said the government was now afraid of the Sheikh Hasina-led popular movement for holding general elections under a caretaker administration.

"Puzzled by the people's enthusiastic response to the struggle for a caretaker administration the present rulers, who have clearly developed a tendency to rig elections, wanted to assassinate the leader of the popular agitation," the AL leader claimed.

Replying to a question, Zillur, however, said that his party had not yet lodged any case in this connection with any police station in the coun-

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Awami League general secretary Zillur Rahman (L) speaking at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club, while party presidium member Abdus Samad Azad looks on.

# Unicef, govt prepare \$250m jt proposal

By Staff Correspondent

The visiting president of the Unicef Executive Board, Anna Semamba Makinda, lauded Bangladesh's achievements in different social sectors and gave the assurance of the UN body's continued support to Bangladesh.

Addressing a press conference in a city hotel yesterday, Makinda said a 250 million US dollar proposal has been prepared jointly by the Unicef and the Government of Bangladesh for improving the health, nutrition, water supply, sanitation and education sectors.

The proposal will be placed at the meeting of the Unicef Executive Board, scheduled to be held early next year for approval.

Unicef Representative in Dhaka Rolf C Carriere and Communication and Information chief Clare Blenkinsop were present at the press briefing.

Makinda described Bang-

ladesh's success in reaching supply of pure drinking water and sanitation to the rural areas as 'phenomenal'.

She expressed satisfaction at the country's progress in the education sector, particularly in primary and female education, due to, what she said, "efforts by both the government and the NGOs."

She, however, expressed her concern at the low consumption of iodine. She urged the government, Unicef and the media to create public awareness about the need for the use of iodine.

She said that 10 of Bangladesh children was very low due to iodine deficiency.

"The goals of the government are the goals of the Unicef," she observed.

Rolf C. Carriere said, Unicef and the ILO have jointly undertaken a study to find out

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# Aristide plans to revive Haiti's parliament

WASHINGTON, Sept 24: Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide plans to make a statement soon on how to put Haiti's parliament back together, US senators said Friday, reports Reuter.

They said they urged Aristide during a meeting to try also to lift quickly part of a UN embargo on the country so food, medical supplies and oil can flow into Haiti.

"The next 72 hours are tremendously important," Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sam Nunn, told reporters after a meeting with Aristide.

He said efforts by Aristide in the next 72 hours can help

soften efforts in Congress to pull US troops out of Haiti quickly.

He said action by Aristide to put Haiti's parliament back in business and to lift part of the UN sanctions would help the US military operation in Haiti and ease pressure in Congress to try next week to impose a short time limit on the US military operation.

AFF from Port-au-Prince reports, Defence Secretary William Perry and General John Shalikashvili, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, arrived here Saturday to review the US military operation to restore democracy in Haiti.

# Govt finds no truth in Hasina's allegation: Press Note

The government, in a preliminary investigation report, has not found any truth in the allegation by the Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad, Sheikh Hasina, that the train in which she was travelling on September 23 was fired upon, a Press Note issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs said last night, reports BSS.

The Press Note said the attention of the government has been drawn to a news item published in different daily newspapers on September 24 reporting that a train carrying the Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina was fired upon. See Page 12 Col 6

# Hasina returns to capital

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina returned to the capital yesterday ending her train journey through the northern districts where she addressed a series of meetings demanding resignation of the government, reports UNB.

The Awami League president began the 'train march' from Khulna on Friday as part of her party's campaign for mustering support for the removal of the BNP government and making way for general elections under a caretaker government.

During her 21-hour sojourn by the inter-city express 'Rupsha', Hasina addressed more than 30 gatherings at different rail stations of 12 districts — Jessore, Jhemaidah, Chuadanga, Kushtia, Pabna, Natore, Nagogaon, Bogra, Joypurhat, Dhanajpur and Nilphamari. See Page 12 Col 8

# Hartal observed at Pabna

PABNA, Sept 24: An eight-hour hartal was observed in the town today protesting the reported gun attack on Sheikh Hasina's compartment during Friday's 'train march' for caretaker government, reports UNB.

Meanwhile, at least five people were injured, one with bullet, in a clash between Awami League and BNP supporters during picketing here Friday night for today's general strike.

Witnesses said both sides exchanged gunshots and blasted bombs during the hour-long clash at Indrapatti at about 9 pm.

# Dhaka assured of continued Unicef help

Visiting President of the Executive Board of UNICEF Anna Semamba Makinda yesterday appreciated Bangladesh's remarkable achievements in different social sectors including water supply and sanitation, reports BSS.

Makinda made this remark when she called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office.

Makinda, who came to Bangladesh on September 17 on a week-long visit, said UNICEF would continue its co-operation in Bangladesh's development in social sectors.

Makinda, who visited Bangladesh two years back, said

See Page 12 Col 3

# Five hurt as soccer fans clash in city

By Staff Correspondent At least five people were injured, two of them seriously, in soccer violence at the Mohammadpur Physical Training Centre ground in the city yesterday.

Violence erupted when the referee showed a red card during a football match between Daudkandi High School and Barisal Nuria School. The referee's decision went against the Daudkandi School whose supporters, in protest, allegedly went on the rampage.

Mujibur Rahman (54), a guardian and Shameem, a player, were admitted to hospital.

Energy Minister Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain was present as chief guest to witness the match organised by the Jatiya School and Madrassah Krita Samity.

Mohammadpur police, however, denied having any knowledge of the violence or injuries.