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by Md Asadullah Khan

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NEWS BRIEFS

Khaleda's public meet at Ctg today

CHITTAGONG, Sept 27: BNP Chairperson Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will address a public meeting at Lalbagh Maidan here tomorrow at 3:15 pm, reports UNB.

Official sources said Begum Zia, accompanied by some ministers, MPs and BNP leaders, will arrive here at 2:45 pm by a Biman flight, reports HNB.

AL rally today

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh Awami League will organise a public rally at Bangabandhu Avenue at 3 pm today. An AL press release said, the rally will be held demanding the resignation of the BNP government and the holding of elections under a caretaker government. Among others, Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina will address the rally.

Gano Forum thanks Khaleda, Hasina

The Gano Forum hailed the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition agreeing to a Commonwealth-brokered dialogue for resolving the current political deadlock. In a statement yesterday GF President Dr. Kamal Hossain called upon Begum Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina to start dialogue immediately to end the standoff, reports UNB.

20 more hurt in Sirajganj

SIRAJGANJ, Sept 27: About 20 people were injured there today seriously, in a renewed clash between the activists of the BNP and Awami League at Victoria quarter area in the town this morning. Police said the clash erupted when some ruling party processionists attacked the AL workers at Victoria quarter area at 10:30 am. The BNP activists brought out the procession to protest today's country-wide rail-road barricade programme of major opposition parties, reports UNB.

Plague spreads to Delhi, Calcutta

SURAT, India, Sept 27: The first cases of pneumonic plague outside this stricken city were reported today hundreds of miles away new Delhi and the Calcutta area, reports AP.

Since the plague broke out in Surat a week ago, at least 54 people have died, and the 400,000 residents who fled appear to be spreading it to rural areas of Gujarat state.

Meanwhile, in the neighbouring state of Maharashtra, another form of the illness — bubonic plague — has spread from villages where it broke out last month to Beed, a town

about 250 miles southeast of Surat, officials said. No deaths have been reported, but 90 people with bubonic plague were treated in rural areas, and 31 cases are now in Beed.

The first cases of plague in India in 30 years can be spread

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by fleas from infected rats or germs from sick people.

Despite all this, the World Health Organisation says it is too early to say that India will suffer a nationwide plague epidemic.

WHO is worried that the

plague is spreading to many places, but there is no need to panic yet. Antibiotics are available, and the government has intensified the surveillance of the disease. Dr BA Kawengian, a WHO official in New Delhi, said today.

The pneumonic plague and the bubonic plague — a less deadly form of the disease that ravaged 14th-century Europe and Asia as "The Black Death" — can both be cured with antibiotics.

But the diseases could strike India's many rural areas, where millions of poor people

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All passengers from India to be screened

Dhaka forms national committee

A 12-member national committee was formed as per directive of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia last night to prevent outbreak of plague in the country, reports BSS.

The committee was constituted with Deputy Leader of the House Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury as chairman and Health and Family Welfare Minister, Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf as member secretary.

The committee in an emergency meeting in Dhaka last night took some steps includ-

ing fumigation of all aircraft coming from India at Dhaka and Chittagong airports.

Arrangements have also been made for medical check-up of all incoming passengers from India at the airport.

The National Committee decided that anybody showing the symptom of the deadly disease would be kept in quarantine at the infectious diseases hospital.

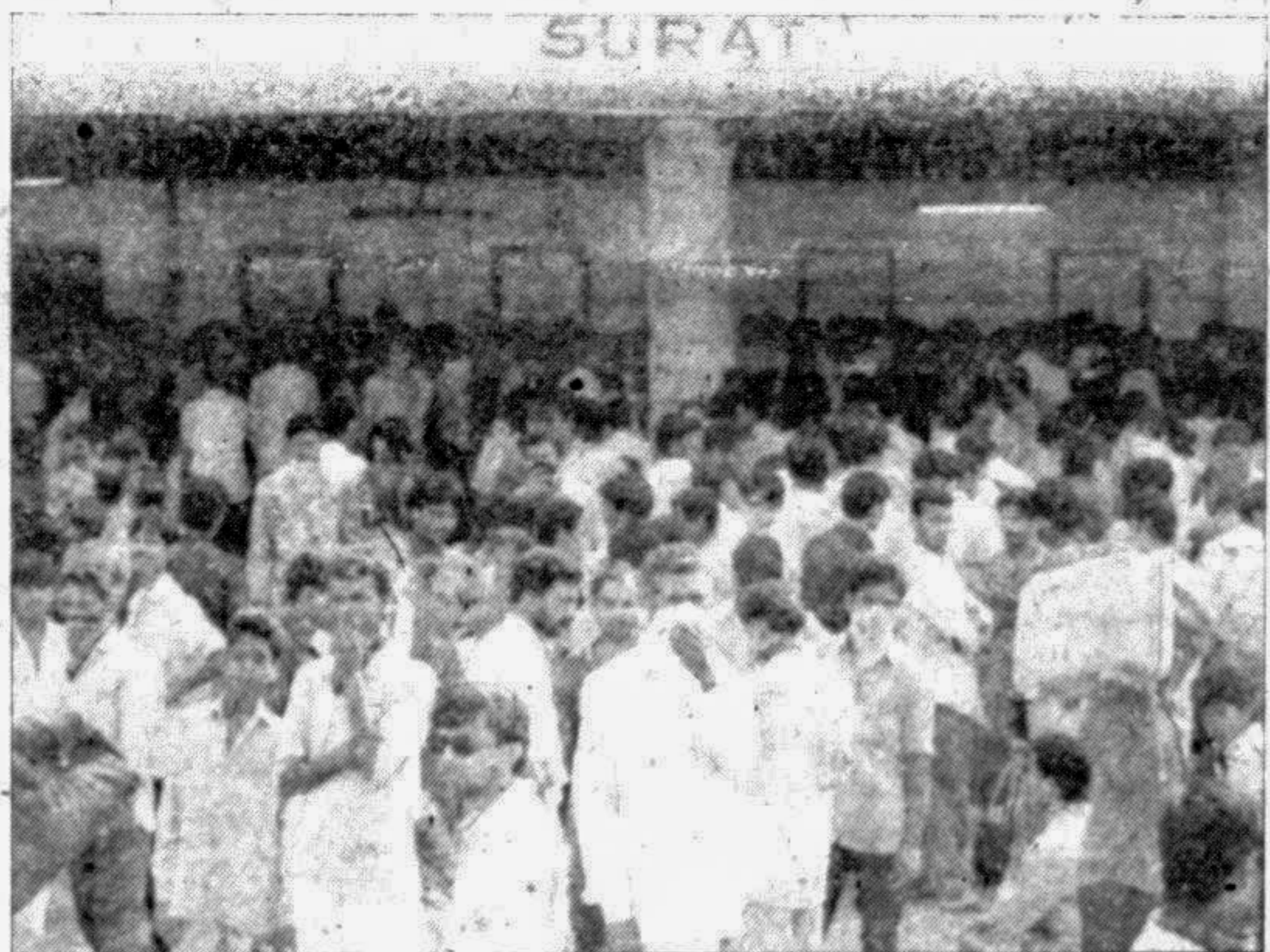
Passenger buses, trucks and private cars coming from India by road will be fumigated at the entry points and the pas-

sengers would be checked up, while anybody found with symptoms of the disease would be kept in quarantine at the nearest infectious diseases hospital.

The committee urged the mass media to help create awareness among the people about the deadly disease.

The government may also temporarily suspend issuance of visas to Indian nationals, said sources at the Ministry of Home Affairs, according to UNB.

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Crowds continue to gather outside the Surat railway station in western India yesterday for trains to take them out of the plague-ridden city. The epidemic has claimed many lives and cases have even been reported in the capital New Delhi and Calcutta. — AFP photo

Chittagong may be declared 'commercial capital' today

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is expected to declare Chittagong city commercial capital of the country today, according to informed sources.

The declaration, may be made at a public meeting in the port city in fulfilment of the pledge made to the citizens of Chittagong during Begum Zia's election campaign in 1990.

The announcement is intended to spur the investment climate of Chittagong, particularly to foreign investors who would like to get one-stop service, minimising their inconvenience of coming to Dhaka for various related work.

Chittagong, having a seaport and an airport, has been able to draw a large number of for-

eign investors in the EPZ. There is also a proposal to set up an exclusive EPZ for the Japanese.

The government, as part of its drive to step up economic activities in Chittagong, has decided to upgrade the facilities at Chittagong Port. Besides, Chittagong airport is likely to be declared an international airport on the completion of the runway expansion scheme. Flights are currently operating from Chittagong to Calcutta, Yangon and Bangkok.

Presently, the headquarters of the Tea Board, Bangladesh Shipping Corporation and the Eastern Division of Bangladesh Railway is located at the port city.

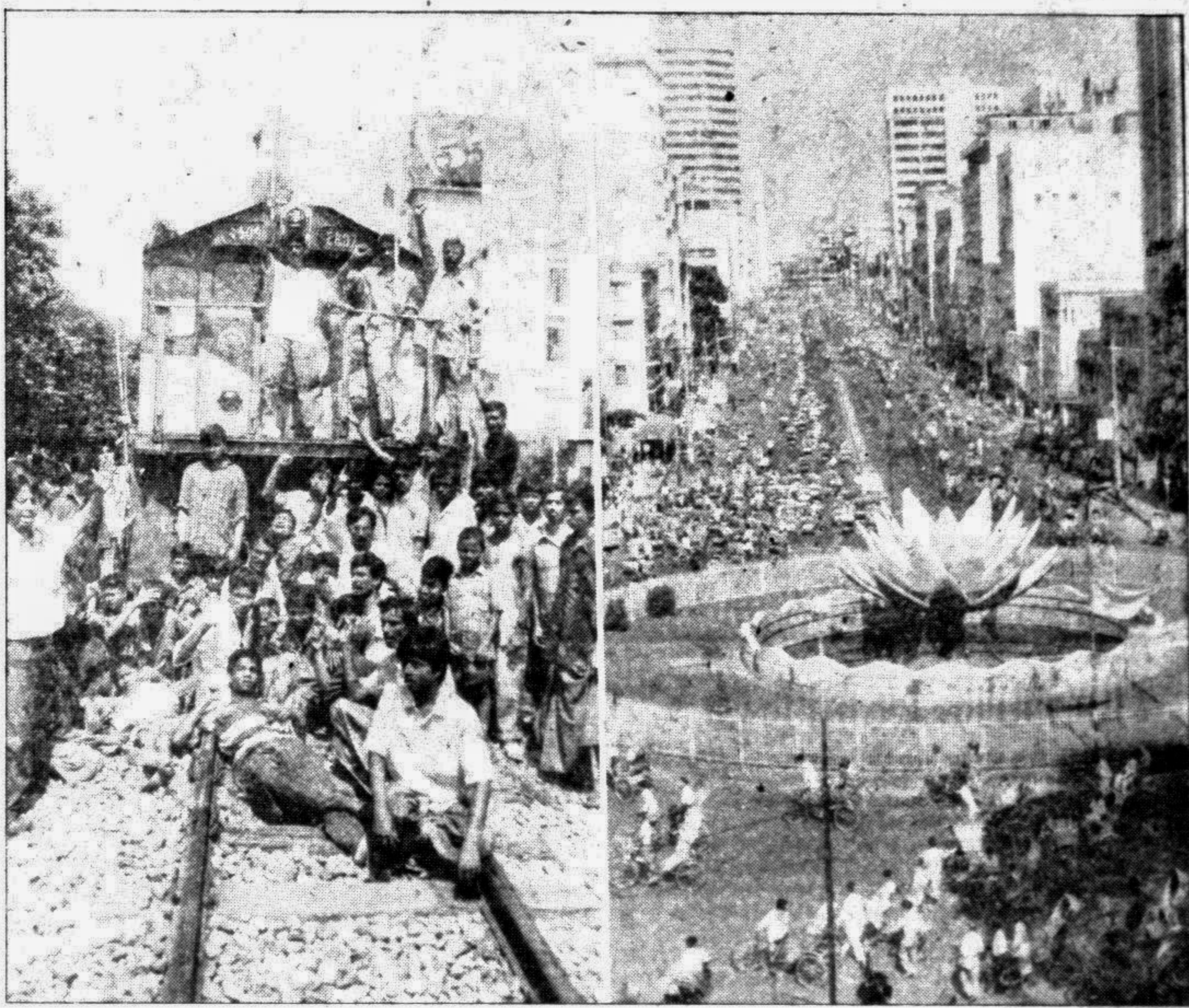
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Tk 62cr emergency plan to improve city's power distribution

The government has taken up a Tk 62-crore emergency scheme to improve the power distribution system of the capital city, heavily affected by frequent load-shedding due to inadequate generation and poor distribution, reports UNB.

Necessary transformers and conductors will be procured under the scheme to be implemented during the current financial year (1994-95), official sources said.

A meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry, with its minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain in the chair, yesterday elaborately discussed the demand, supply and distribution position of electricity.



Opposition activists block a train near the Mohakhali level crossing (L) and the city's busy commercial district, Motijheel (R) is totally shorn of motorised traffic during yesterday's country-wide barricade programme of the major opposition parties. — Star photo

Opposition barricade disrupts life

Star Report

The Opposition-sponsored road and rail barricade disrupted normal life in Dhaka and other parts of the country yesterday.

The Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami enforced the country-wide blockade as part of their agitation programme demanding national elections under a caretaker government.

Barring a few stray incidents, the dawn-to-dusk barricade programme passed off by and large peacefully.

Over 50 persons, including a Dhaka city AL leader and five railway engine drivers were injured during picketing by the agitators at different places in the country.

Dhaka, as well as other cities and major towns remained isolated throughout the day as train services and bus move-

ments were totally disrupted due to barricades on the railway tracks and the highways.

A total of 29 trains were scheduled to leave the capital's Kamalapur station for different destinations during the day hours yesterday. Of them only one — the Noakhali-bound Upakul Express — could leave the station at 7:20 am, only to be halted by pickets near Comilla town. The Chittagong-bound Mahanagar Prabhati left the station with a few passengers at 9:45 am, but came to a halt at the city's Khilgaon crossing because of a barricade put up on the track there. The driver of the train sustained injury when the pickets threw stones at the engine.

The Jamuna Express, which was coming to Kamalapur Station from Jagannathganj Ghat in Jamalpur was stopped at the

city's Mohakhali level crossing and remained stranded there until evening.

Four out of 15 scheduled incoming trains could reach Dhaka yesterday, all in the morning hours before the pickets reached the tracks.

According to Railway sources, the entire railway service, both in the Eastern and the Western zones virtually collapsed as 279 passenger trains were either stranded midway or could not start at all for their destinations.

Seven railway engines and 10 passenger coaches were partially damaged by the agitators, said authorities.

Agitators put up road barricades on all the major entry points around the capital city. Pickets stayed in groups at vantage points such as Kanchi. — See Page 12 Col 3

Agitation contrary to acceptance of talks offer: BNP

By Staff Correspondent

The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) said yesterday that the Opposition's agitation programmes were in contradiction with its acceptance of the proposal for a Commonwealth brokered dialogue to end the present political impasse.

"Acceptance of the proposal proved that everything is possible through a dialogue. I don't know why they have gone for street agitation," BNP central leader and Information Minister Nazmul Huda told The Daily Star.

He said the opposition parties have gone for an extreme form of political agitation although the ruling party has people's mandate to rule the country for another one and a half years.

"The whole nation is noticing what they are doing in the name of hartal and barricade. The people will judge whether these are good or bad for the country." — See Page 12 Col 8

Rickshaws ruled city streets yesterday

By Staff Correspondent

Rickshaws ruled the city streets yesterday during the 12-hour road and rail barricade programme of the major opposition political parties.

Although the cities and towns were exempted from the barricade programme, the roads in the capital remained mostly devoid of all mechanised transports.

Cars remained off the streets and the transport owners were afraid of bringing out the buses, tempos and scooters because of confusion created due to ambiguities in the announcements of the political parties observing the programme. In a way, a hartal-like situation prevailed in the capital.

Although a few minibuses

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Govt-Opposition talks: Ball starts rolling

By Staff Correspondent

The process for a dialogue between the government and the Opposition

to end the lingering political impasse started yesterday with initial contacts between the sides.

The Deputy Leader of Parliament Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury rang up his Opposition counterpart Abdus Samad Azad during the day, reportedly seeking a time and venue to start the Commonwealth-brokered talks. BNP sources told The Daily Star late last night.

Samad Azad told Prof Chowdhury that he would discuss the matter with the Leader of the Opposition, Sheikh Hasina, and give a reply in due time. Opposition sources said.

In a related development,

leaders of the three major opposition parties—the Awami League, Jatiya Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami—went into a closed door meeting at the Sangsad-Bhaban in the evening to study the implications of the three-point formula for talks under the good offices of the Commonwealth Secretary General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku.

Chief Emeka, who returned to London after a five-day visit to Dhaka earlier this month, however, made no mention of the roles, if any, of the Jatiya Party or the Jamaat in the proposed talks in his faxed communication to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina Monday.

During their parley, which

Hasina visits injured party leader

Awami League president and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday visited injured M A Aziz, city AL vice-president, at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, reports UNB.

According to a party press release, Aziz received injury during yesterday's road and rail barricade programme when the "armed terrorists of ruling BNP" attacked a procession of Lalbagh thana Awami League at Chankharpool area.

The Awami League chief stayed with the injured party leader for some time and enquired about his condition.

Health Minister offers talks to BMA leaders

Health Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf yesterday offered to hold talks with the Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) leaders, reports BSS.

In a letter addressed to the BMA president, the minister proposed that the talks could be held at 4 pm today at his conference room.

The minister expressed the hope that the BMA leaders would respond to the proposal for talks in view of people's sufferings due to current doctors' strike.

UNB adds: The strike enforced by the government doctors passed off its seventh day yesterday.

The Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) called the indefinite strike demanding the realisation of its 21-point demand.

US troops take over parliament bldg, city hall in Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Sept 27: American troops took over Haiti's Parliament building and city hall today, preparing for the return of Haiti's elected lawmakers and the Port-au-Prince mayor, reports AP.

To clear the streets of weapons, the Americans began their guns-for-money programme today, paying 50 to 300 dollars to anyone who turns in a firearm.

Military police stretched razor wire about 17 meters outside the Parliament building, while soldiers in green camouflage uniforms patrolled

the roof and stood guard inside the main gate.

A large crowd of Haitians gathered to watch. They booed loudly as a truckload of Haitian police drove by.

At city hall, armored vehicles were parked just inside the compound and US Army jeeps with machine guns mounted on top stood guard outside.

The Parliament was to convene tomorrow to begin discussing an amnesty law for Haitian military leaders. The law was part of the deal worked out by the military junta and a US delegation

headed by former President Jimmy Carter.

US sources said they expected Port-au-Prince Mayor Evans Paul to emerge from hiding Thursday and return to his office at city hall.

Paul, who was President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's campaign manager, has been in hiding for much of the three years since Aristide was overthrown by the military.

US officials also took control of the hillside Electoral Council building. This was considered a significant move, perhaps indicated the United

States would have a strong say in partial elections scheduled for December.

The UN Development Programme, meanwhile, said today that its warehouse in Port-au-Prince was ransacked and 11 tons of food taken. Spokesman Ian Guest estimated the value of food lost at \$35,000.

Meanwhile, a US soldier was killed in Haiti, a State Department official reported today. It was the first death reported among US troops who entered the country eight days ago.

The official said the death did not appear to be related to the soldier's combat duties. No other details were available.

Reuters adds: Armed supporters of exiled president Aristide have taken over the northern town of Le Borgne after a weekend of unrest in Haiti, a Haitian military official said.

"The subdistrict of Le Borgne has been attacked and taken by armed civilians because of the situation that has developed in the north," Colonel Pierre Antoine told reporters at military headquarters.

A UN report says President Clinton lifted US sanctions against Haiti Monday except those that affect Haiti's military leaders in an effort to ease the pain of the poorest nation in the hemisphere, now occupied by thousands of US troops.

In an address to the UN General Assembly, Clinton also said the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo, under protection of a UN-imposed safe zone, "once again faces the prospect of strangulation by Bosnian Serbs and that the United Nations will have to show a new resolve to save it."