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NEWS BRIEFS

Hasina turns 47

A milad mahfil was organised at the Bangabandhu Bhavan after Magreb prayers on the occasion of the 47th birthday of the Leader of the Opposition and Awami League President, Sheikh Hasina, reports UNB.

3 tribals with heroin held

From Staff Correspondent CHITTAGONG, Sept 28: Security personnel caught three tribals youths and recovered from them 900 grams of heroin today at Kaptai. Official sources said they were caught from Bangalhalia area of Kaptai while carrying the drug in two packets. They were later handed over to police.

2 killed in road mishaps

By DMCH Correspondent At least two persons were killed and another one was injured in separate incidents in the city yesterday. A pedestrian was killed under the wheels of a speeding jeep on the Bishaw road, Baridhara yesterday morning. The victim Fulecha Khatun, 42, was seriously injured and was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where she died. In another road accident, a rickshaw passenger was killed when a 'mishuk' knocked his rickshaw near the German Technical Institute, Mirpur at about 2:30 pm Tuesday. The victim Jabeed Sirker, 40, was fatally injured and was sent to the DMCH where he succumbed to his injuries yesterday morning.

Blast kills 5 near Islamabad

ISLAMABAD, Sept 28: An explosion today at Pakistan's main weapons production complex near Islamabad killed five workers, a government statement said. The statement did not say what caused the explosion at Wah, 40 km (25 miles) northwest of Islamabad, reports Reuter.

Mandatory testing for plague begins

All but 7 entry points along border sealed



A team of doctors entering a Biman aircraft at the Zia International Airport yesterday as part of government's plague screening programme. Biman ground staff seen wearing face masks while handling passengers arriving from Calcutta. — Star photo

By Staff Correspondent

The government has decided to temporarily close down all but seven entry points along the Bangladesh-India border while health officials started screening all incoming travellers from India at the country's airports and border points to check the spread of plague.

The precautionary measures were taken in the wake of the recent outbreak of plague in the western Indian state of Gujarat. A few cases of the highly contagious disease have also been detected in the neighbouring Indian state of west Bengal.

The authorities have also

Plague cases across India multiply

NEW DELHI, Sept 28: Plague cases multiplied across India today as the scourge spread into the region surrounding Bombay, to the heart of the capital New Delhi and across the country to the teeming city of Calcutta, reports Reuter.

Nearly 1000 people were stricken by the disease which kills if not treated, authorities in New Delhi said.

The victims included 333 new cases of plague in the western state of Maharashtra, reports Reuter.

Both dialogue, agitation to continue: Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina said yesterday that she would sit for a dialogue with the government on the modalities of a caretaker government, restructuring of the Election Commission and formulation of a code of conduct for the ministers.

"We will continue dialogue with the government and agitation against it simultaneously until it accepts our demand for a caretaker administration to conduct general elections," the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament said at a public meeting at Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital yesterday afternoon.

The AL chief, however, said we would boycott such talks at any stage if we found that these failed to protect people's interests.

"We'll also back out from the proposed dialogue if it is arranged with the motive of showing their (rulers) powers

and the occasion is covered by the state controlled media", Hasina said.

The AL organised the public meeting demanding resignation of the 'corrupt, terrorist and vote-dacoit' BNP government to pave the way for elections under a non-party, caretaker administration.

Sheikh Hasina criticised BNP's three and a half-year rule, pledged various steps if her party was voted to power and sought public support for her current agitation.

The meeting was also addressed by leaders of the party including Abdus Samad Azad, Abdul Mannan, Sajeda Choudhury, Tofael Ahmed, Amir Hossain Amu, Zillur Rahman, Mohammad Nasim, Abdul Jalil, Matia Choudhury, Mozaffar Hossain Paltu, Mayor Mohammad Hanif, KM Jahangir, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin and Sultan Mohammad Mansur

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Opposition's 40-day agitation programme

Mainstream opposition parties yesterday announced a 40-day programme from October 1 which will culminate into a sit-in outside the Prime Minister's Secretariat on November 9 to press for a neutral caretaker government, reports UNB.

The almost identical programmes were announced simultaneously from the rallies of the Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami. Sheikh Hasina, Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury and Abbas Ali Khan declared their respective programmes.

The Awami League and Jatiya Party will stage sit-in before the PM's Secretariat on November 9 while the Jamaat will lead a procession towards the PM's Secretariat on that day.

The AL programmes: Protest day on October 1, 'padajatra' from Tongi to Mahakhali on October 9, 'train march' on October 16-18, See Page 12 Col 8



Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina addressing a public meeting at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Hundreds of PML activists held in Sindh

KARACHI, Sept 28: Hundreds of members of the opposition Pakistan Muslim League (PML) were arrested throughout the southern Sindh province today, as leader Nawaz Sharif vowed to defy an entry ban, party sources said, reports AFP.

The detentions follow a ban placed on six senior leaders, including Sharif and his ally Awami National Party (ANP) chief Ajmal Khattak, from entering Sindh, on the eve of series of nationwide anti-government rallies. PML sources said some 600 supporters and lower-level

party leaders had been taken into custody across Sindh, considered a bastion of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's ruling Pakistan Peoples Party.

There was no immediate confirmation from police. Former Prime Minister Sharif, campaigning nationwide to topple Benazir's government, said Wednesday he would go ahead with Thursday's planned rally in the southern port city of Karachi in Sindh, the PML said.

Describing the ban, imposed on him overnight Tuesday by the provincial Sindh government, as a "conspiracy

to divide the country, Sharif said "Sindh is Pakistan and Pakistan is our homeland. Nobody can stop us from going anywhere we wish to go" in the country.

Last week Sharif called for opposition party supporters to hold rallies and demonstrations in major cities and towns on Thursday to force Benazir's resignation.

Late Tuesday, the Sindh government barred Sharif, his two former ministers Abdul Sattar Lalika and Fakhre Imam and a former deputy speaker of the National Assembly, Nawaz

125 out of 950 rescued so far Hundreds feared killed in Estonian ferry disaster

HELSINKI, Finland, Sept 28: An Estonian ferry carrying more than 950 people capsized and sank in the Baltic Sea early today, and officials said hundreds of people were missing and feared dead, reports AP.

Seven hours after the ferry Estonia sank, only about 125 people had been rescued from the 12-degree Celsius water, Finnish authorities said.

"We saw about 40 life rafts," said Swedish rescue helicopter pilot Stefan Carneros. "Unfortunately, most of them were empty." He said waves in the area reached 6 meters.

The sinking threatened to become one of the worst passenger ship disasters in recent years. More than half of those on board were Swedish, and authorities set up an emergency center at a port just outside Stockholm for relatives of the victims.

Stormy seas and winds topping 90 kph were hindering rescue operations near the site of the disaster, about 37 kilometers from the Finnish island of Uto off the country's southwestern coast.

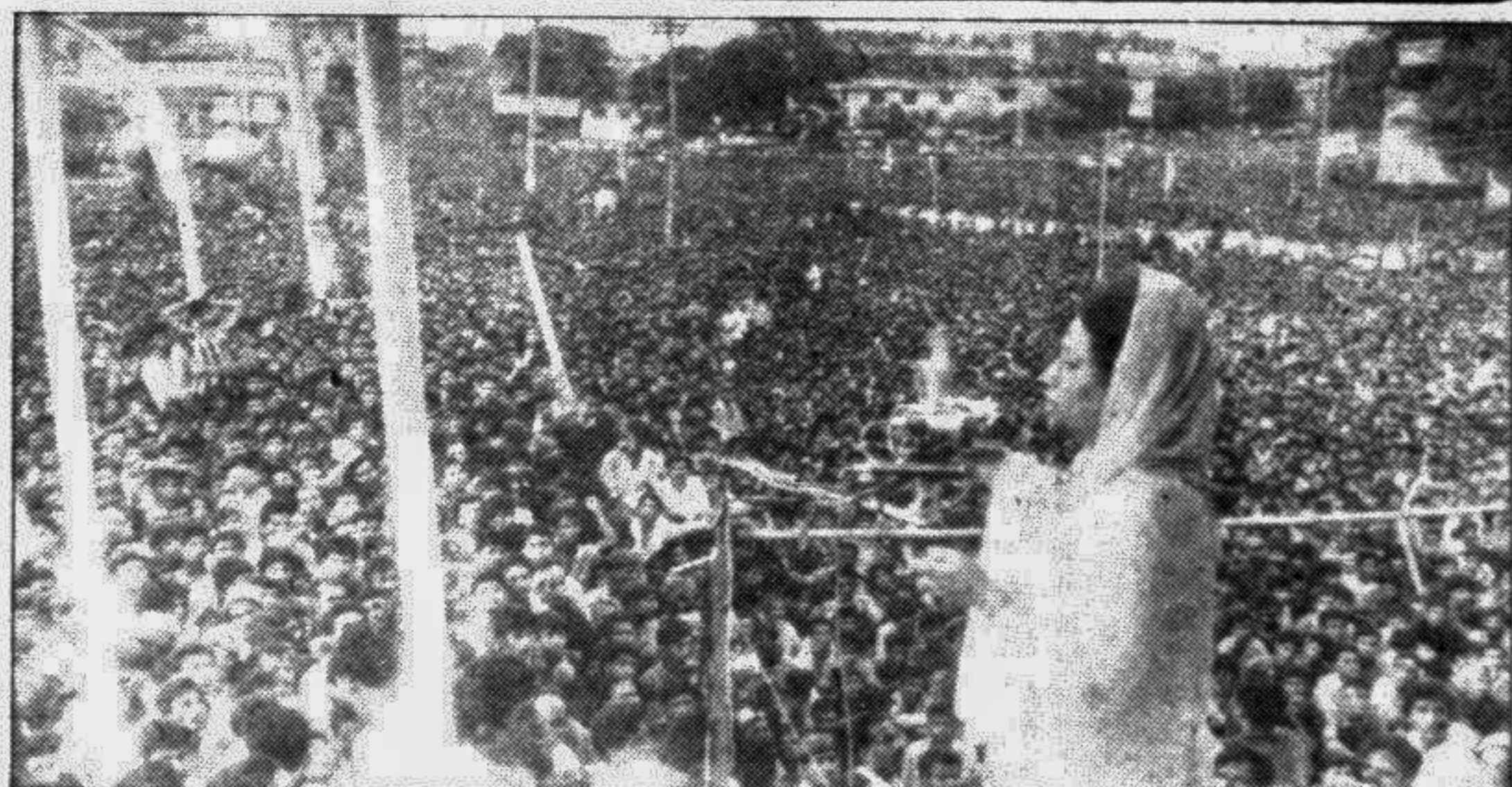
Finnish navy rescue ships and helicopters were at the scene. At least five other pas-

senger ferries nearby also were trying to find victims in the stormy, dark waters.

The Estonia sank sometime after midnight (2200 GMT Tuesday). The ferry sent out a distress signal before it went down. Some news reports said the ship sank in five minutes while others said it took closer to 30 minutes.

At least a dozen survivors were rescued by another ferry, the Mariella, said its information officer, Per Erik Sederqvist.

At least 10 others were brought aboard the ferry Sym- See Page 12 Col 3



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing a public meeting at Laldighi Maidan in Chittagong yesterday. — PID photo

Opposition team for dialogue to include leaders of JS groups

By Nurul Kabir

The Opposition team for the proposed Commonwealth brokered dialogue with the ruling party to end the present political impasse would include leaders of all the parties and groups having representation in Parliament, Chief Whip of the Opposition Mohammad Nasim told The Daily Star.

Ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leader and Chief Whip of Parliament Khandaker Delwar Hossain told this correspondent that his party had nothing to say as regards composition of the Opposition team for negotiations.

The Commonwealth Secretary General had however proposed a dialogue between the ruling party and the principal opposition in Parliament Awami League.

"According to Opposition sources, the Commonwealth proposal for a BNP-AL dialogue made the 'principal' Opposition party's two major partners — Jatiya Party (JP) and Jamaat — in the agitation for a caretaker government to See Page 12 Col 1

Package of development programmes for Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Sept 28: Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia said here today the people of this country would reject the unconstitutional demand made by the opposition for a caretaker government.

Addressing a public meeting at Laldighi maidan she said "The opposition being jealous

BSS and UNB reported: Amidst cheers, thunderous slogans and clappings from the audience, the Prime Minister announced Chittagong as the country's commercial capital and said an international trade centre would be set up in the port city in future.

of the tide of development works done by the BNP government and finding no other means, has come to the field with the caretaker government issue."

The Prime Minister urged the people to get united to spearhead the ongoing development and democratic process in the country by resisting the 'undemocratic and unconstitutional move'.

She announced a package of development programmes for

the development of the port city that included setting up of a separate education board here, turning of Chittagong airport into an international one, allocation of land for establishing an international trade centre, setting up of a botanical garden, memorial hall and a college in memory of the martyrs and upgradation of the Chittagong General Hospital.

Besides, measures will be taken for establishing new head offices of banks and insurance companies here to increase the infrastructural facilities in this port city.

The Prime Minister assured of all possible help from her government to resolve the problems of Chittagong.

She said "I am always with the people of Chittagong both at the time of sorrow and happiness."

She recalled that her party had started the anti-autocratic agitation from Chittagong.

"Today, if you want to protect the democratic process initiated by BNP government, then join hands with us to re- See Page 12 Col 8

BTV staff resent ministry order regarding GM

Star Report

An order by the Ministry of Information has caused resentment among the officers and employees of Bangladesh Television (BTV) who, at a meeting yesterday, announced a series of programmes to register their protest.

A ministry decision September 26 cancelling a previous order issued only September 24 appointing Nawazesh Ali Khan the General Manager of the state-controlled media was criticised by the BTV staff as arbitrary.

A press release issued yesterday by three associations of BTV staff decided not to give coverage to the programmes of any minister. This boycott would not, of course, apply to coverage of programmes of the See Page 12 Col 6

Doctors reject govt's offer

By Staff Correspondent The Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) yesterday rejected a government compromise offer to end the indefinite strike of the government doctors, sources said.

The offer was made at a meeting between two BMA representatives and the minister and the deputy minister for health at the ministry yesterday afternoon.

The government proposed to implement four major demands including promotion See Page 12 Col 8

Rate of interest on agri loan reduced

The present rate of interest on agriculture loan has been reduced to 11 per cent from 16 per cent with effect from October 1, reports BSS.

This was revealed at a meeting of Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Finance in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday with State Minister for Finance Mujibur Rahman in the chair.

After a detail discussion on a resolution sent to the committee by the Jatiya Sangsad on 'interest free agriculture loan be given to the farmers immediately', the meeting decided that the Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh Bank and scheduled banks concerned would submit a report on how the present interest rate of banks on agriculture loan could be reduced further.

Young girl raped on launch

By Staff Correspondent An Ansar constable and a launch employee have been taken into police custody for allegedly raping a young launch passenger.

Poly, a 16-year-old girl who boarded a Dhaka-bound motor launch—the MV Johnny-2—at Gournadi Tuesday, was allegedly raped by one Sohrab. See Page 12 Col 7

Note of Thanks

The Management of Meghna Shrimp Culture Ltd. is pleased to announce that about Tk 12.00 crores has been received against subscription for public issue of shares of Tk 2.50 crore (including 50 lacs reserved for ICB) of Meghna Shrimp Culture Ltd.

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