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**NEWS BRIEFS**

**ML leaders call on Khaleda**  
Leaders of the Muslim League yesterday met with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and discussed the current political situation in the country. They also exchanged views on various national issues during the free and frank discussion at the Prime Minister's office in the afternoon, officials said. The Muslim League leaders informed Begum Zia of the unification of different factions of the party. League leaders Mohammad Ayenuddin, M A Salam, A N M Yusuf and Sirajuddin were present, reports UNB.

**Australian envoy meets Hasina**  
Australian High Commissioner in Bangladesh Kenneth William Aspinall called on Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina at her official residence in Dhaka yesterday. Earlier, Norwegian Charge d'Affaires Tore Toreng also met with the Opposition Leader at the residence at 29 Minto Road. They discussed matters of mutual interests, reports UNB.

## Construction of Jamuna Bridge begins Oct 16

By Asiuzzaman

The construction of the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge (JMB) begins October 16 with the start of river training works. JMB authority sources said.

Communications Minister Oli Ahmed will inaugurate the 'final phase' of the 696 million dollar project.

River training — one of the four major components of the project — involves an estimated expenditure of about 276 million dollars. It aims at checking erosion by the mighty Jamuna in the project areas.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia laid the foundation stone of the bridge April 10 last.

Dutch firm Hamvanordacz, which won the river training contract, has already stationed dredgers and heavy machinery at the project site to start the work.

A 40-month construction schedule for the bridge was prepared during the visit of a World Bank appraisal team to Dhaka last month.

The World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the Japanese Government will provide 200 million dollars each for the project. The rest will be borne by the Bangladesh government.

The 4.8 km long and 18.5m wide four-lane bridge would link the eastern and the north-western parts of the country. The 27-span bridge will also have provisions for metre-gauge rail track and power, gas and telecommunication lines.

Meanwhile, the eastern flood embankments-cum-access roads have already been constructed in the project areas. JMBA sources said.

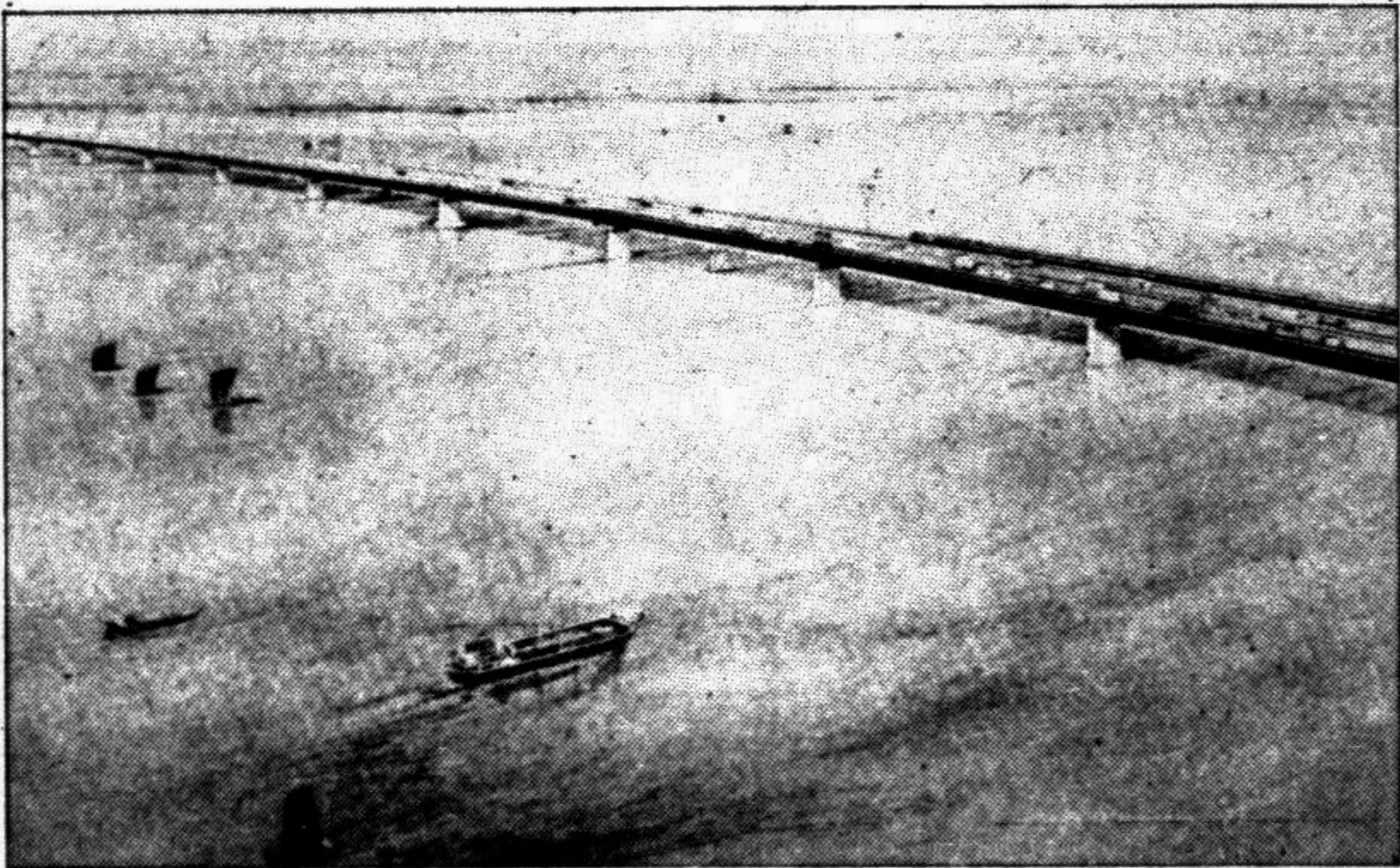
The project needed acquisition of some 5,680 acres of land on both sides of the river, most of which have already been acquired.

A total of 72,000 people of some 12,000 families will have to be resettled because of the project at a cost of Tk 36 crore.

The JMBA has also taken up an environment management action plan (EMAP) to maintain the ecological balance in the areas.

The bridge and the approach viaduct will be constructed by the Hyundai Company of South Korea and two approach roads by another Korean firm, Samwhan Corporation.

The bridge is expected to be completed and opened to traffic in early 1998.



An artist's impression of the proposed Jamuna multi-purpose bridge. Star file photo.

## WB discourages quota system for garments industry

The World Bank has suggested more efficient customs management and further liberalisation of the Special Bonded Warehouse scheme for development of the country's garments industry.

Readymade garments made up 50 per cent of the country's total exports and earned US 1.2 billion dollars in 1992-93. The net export value, excluding the import costs for material procurement, was 420 million, according to Bangladesh Bank calculations.

Garments exports rose to 1.5 billion dollars in 1993-94 and are expected to continue to climb if favourable aspects of the policy environment are maintained, the World Bank said.

The industry's own efficiency can be improved through modern technology and training to the workers to make it better able to face future competition, WB sources in Dhaka told UNB.

But a critical factor is the need for even better management with minimal political interference of quota allocation, monitoring, and secondary market trading.

The sources said bureaucratic involvement is difficult to avoid since quotas are awarded on a national basis and the alternative approach of leaving the task to the existing producers could reinforce some monopolistic tendencies.

About 70 of the operating readymade garments units take some orders directly from foreign buyers. Many of these units are recent entrants, indicating a progressive trend in the industry's structure.

The Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters' Association (BGMEA) estimates that direct sales now account for about five per cent of the total, and producers may be responsible for materials procurement for another five per cent.

In addition, joint venture companies operate about two dozen of the present units, in which at least the foreign partners are likely to be linked to international buyers.

While subcontracting should not be discouraged, the WB said, a transition to greater control of marketing may be necessary for the industry's growth in the medium-to long-term as the quota system disappears.

This is not possible in the meanwhile for the part of the trade which is under quotas, since these are controlled by foreign buyers.

The WB says that the eventual abolition, and price and exchange rate considerations, could divert buyers to more traditional sources such as Hong Kong and Korea, or to potentially cheaper sources such as Vietnam, Nepal and perhaps Laos and Cambodia.

It suggested that dependence on imported cotton and synthetic fabric in readymade garments exports be reduced to help the ailing domestic woven textiles industries and increase value addition.

These developments should be based largely on the demand of export-oriented garments units rather than domestic demand for cloth, and the restructured industries

## Honduran ship detained in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Oct 6: A Honduran flag carrying vessel was detained at the Chittagong port today following an admiralty suit filed against it.

According to sources at the port, the vessel MV Amanecerida — which arrived on here September 27 with pig iron from Ukraine was scheduled to leave the Chittagong port jetty no. 2 tomorrow where it took berth.

But its voyage was stopped following a detention order for non-payment of the cargo supplier's money.

## WB-IMF meet in Madrid concludes Saifur outlines strategies for sound monetary policies

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday urged the world community to extend support to the IMF and World Bank in establishing sound monetary policies and achieving high quality growth for defeating poverty, reports UNB.

In his closing speech to the three-day annual meeting of the Bank and the IMF in Madrid, he outlined strategies in this regard and said the clear indications of the general direction, which emerged from the deliberation of governors, should be evolved by the two bodies over the next half century.

"Our deliberations point to a broad consensus on the need to forge on the road toward enhanced economic policy coordination, higher levels of sustainable growth, and improved living standards," Saifur, the outgoing chairman of the Board of Governors of the Bank and the Fund, told the meeting.

"We must do our part to give the Bretton Woods Institutions the support needed to achieve the goals we have outlined," he said, seeking political will toward achievement of the shared objectives.

According to a message received in Dhaka from the Spanish capital, he said the governors had endorsed the Madrid Declaration to firmly pursue strategies for all countries aimed at the achievement of high quality growth.

The universal need to gear up the national savings and investment rates

## Dialogue with Govt Opposition to work out details after emissary's arrival

By Staff Correspondent

The opposition parties in Parliament will work out necessary details for the proposed dialogue with the government after the arrival of the Commonwealth Secretary General's emissary.

"The date and related matters would be settled after his arrival," Mohammad Nasim, Chief Whip of the Opposition, said yesterday at a press briefing.

The Commonwealth emissary, Sir Ninian Stephen, a former Governor General of Australia, arrives in Dhaka October 11 to facilitate talks between the government and the opposition parties to try and end the present political impasse.

The press briefing was held after a three-hour meeting of the opposition leaders with Sheikh Hasina in the chair at

## Hasina meets party workers today

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina meets her party colleagues from across the country in the city today in her fresh bid to gear up the Opposition agitation demanding general elections under a caretaker government.

According to party sources, the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament is likely, to ask her party colleagues to put in greater efforts for realising the demand for a caretaker government.

The day-long meeting, beginning at 9 am at Hasina's official residence at Minto Road is expected to be attended by the central, district, city/town

## France refuses one-week visa to Taslima

PARIS, Oct 6: Taslima Nasreen, the exiled Bangladeshi writer, Thursday cancelled a visit to France because authorities would only issue her a 24-hour visa, reports AP.

Foreign Minister Alain Juppe defended the decision to deny Nasreen a requested one-week visa, saying her security could not be assured for more than one day.

Nasreen had planned to appear on a nationally televised literary show Friday, hold a press conference Monday in Paris, and visit book stores in Marseille and Strasbourg.

Juppe, answering questions before the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, said Nasreen could have appeared on the TV show, but would have had to leave shortly thereafter. He said the Interior Ministry, which oversees the police, felt her safety could not be assured for more than 24 hours.

Nasreen, 32, has been living in Sweden since she fled Bangladesh on August 10. Fundamentalists in Bangladesh had denounced her writings as blasphemous.

Reporters without Borders, a Paris-based group defending freedom of expression, questioned the Foreign Ministry's decision, saying Nasreen recently had an untroubled three-day visit to Portugal. The group also said France had balked at some visa applications made by British writer Salman Rushdie, condemned to death by fundamentalists for his writings.

## Lankan FM likely to visit Dhaka this month

Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgama is expected to visit Bangladesh in October, officials in Dhaka said yesterday, reports UNB.

Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman, who is now leading the Bangladesh delegation in the current UN General Assembly session, extended an invitation to Kadirgama to visit Bangladesh during a meeting with him at the UN headquarters.

The Lankan Foreign Minister agreed to visit Dhaka at a mutual convenient time in October, according to a message received in the city yesterday.

The exact date of the trip will be finalised in due time, the officials added.

## Dhaka seeks int'l help to solve Ganges problem

Bangladesh yesterday sought international support for an early and equitable solution of the crucial issue of sharing Ganges water with India, reports UNB.

Addressing the 49th UN General Assembly in New York, Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman said the critical issue of sharing the Ganges water with India remained unresolved for long but hoped that India would agree to fair deal in sharing of waters of the common rivers.

"Passage of one after another dry season without flow of water in the Ganges is having a cumulative disastrous impact on the economy and environment of one-third of our country and socio-economic survival of 40 million people," he pointed out, in an apparent reference to the dehydrational impact of the Farakka barrage over the river.

"We are earnestly hoping that India, our SAARC partner and neighbour, would agree to a fair sharing of the common rivers, including the Ganges," he said, venting concern over the situation.

Mostafiz also hoped "Our common friends would recognise the implications of the situation and encourage support for an early and equitable solution."

Mostafiz, however, said Bangladesh's relations with the largest neighbour, India, had seen some improvement on the issue of return of Chakma refugees and economic interactions.

Referring to the repatriation of Myanmar refugees, the Foreign Minister said the exodus of 250,000 refugees to Bangladesh since 1991 had imposed an enormous socio-economic burden.

He said the rate of repatriation was still slow and hoped that with UNHCR's policy of mass registration, the pace of repatriation would pick up.

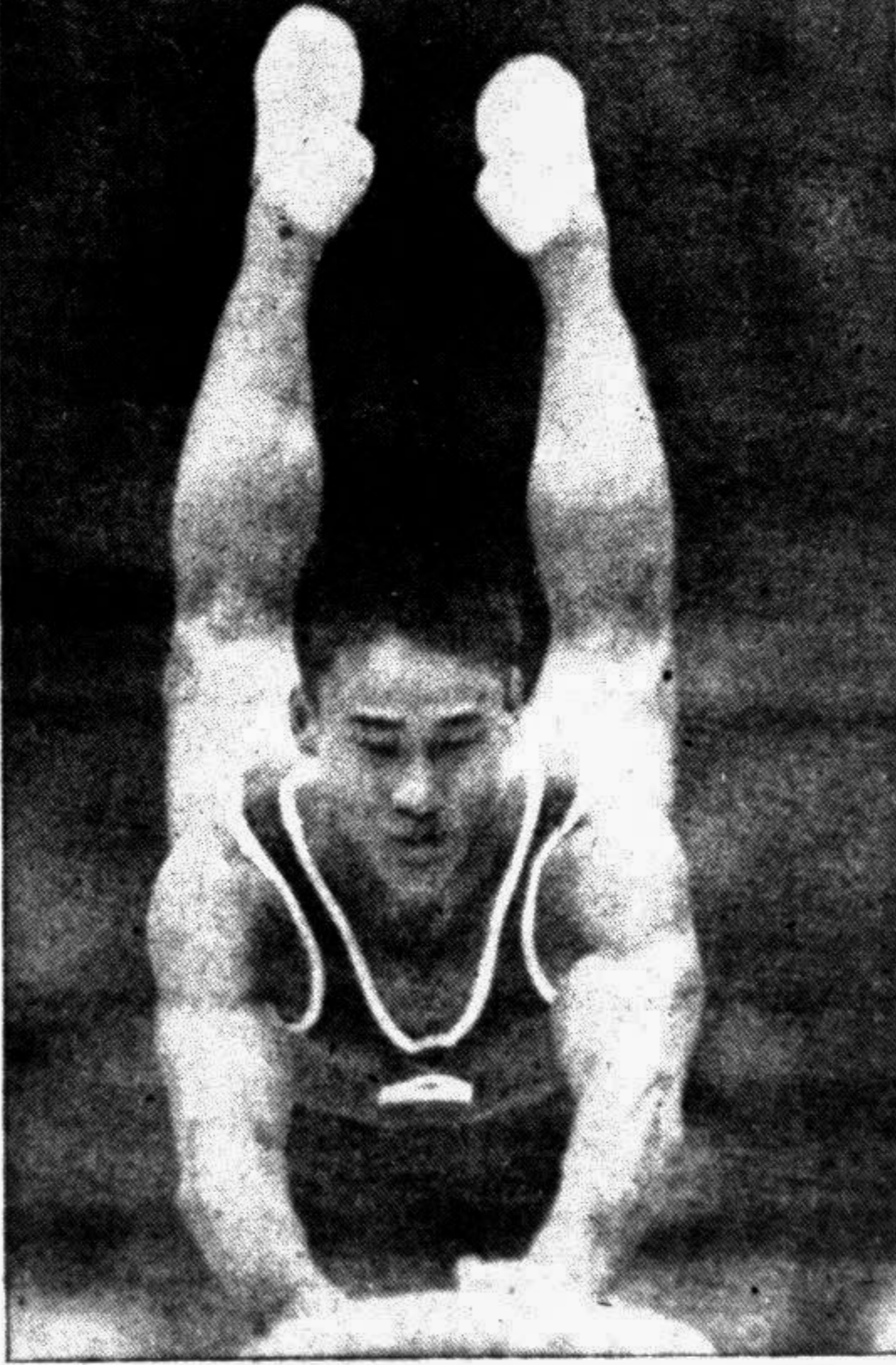
## Govt doctors postpone indefinite strike

By Staff Correspondent

Government doctors 'postponed' their indefinite strike on the sixteenth consecutive day yesterday in view of a mandatory injunction by the High Court.

The decision was taken at an emergency meeting of the central council of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) at its office yesterday morning with its President Dr M A Majed in the chair.

"We have decided to postpone the indefinite strike which began on September 21 to abide by the mandatory injunction by the High Court Division of the Supreme Court," BMA Secretary General Dr Gazi Abdul Haq told The



South Korea's Yeo Hong-hup an action during his gold medal winning performance on the vault yesterday during the men's apparatus finals at the 12th Asian Games in Hiroshima. — AFP photo

## US will change policy if Pakistan agrees to NPT

WASHINGTON, Oct 6: The United States would waive its policy barring selling weapons to Pakistan if Islamabad works with Washington to achieve its non-proliferation goals for the region, the State Department said Thursday, reports AP.

Asked whether Washington would lift sanctions on Pakistan as it did for China yesterday with a pledge to stop selling ground-to-ground missiles abroad, spokesman Michael McCurry said that would depend what Islamabad agreed to do.

"The same type of dialogue that resulted in agreement yesterday between the United States and China should occur between the United States and Pakistan," McCurry said.

Above India's strong objections, Washington has agreed to send 38 F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan if it agrees to verifiable cap on the production of nuclear-weapons materials.

Both India and Pakistan are suspected of developing nuclear weapons and have refused to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Pakistan has been suspected of working on building an atomic bomb to counter India which exploded a nuclear device in 1974.

"We have offered Pakistan the opportunity to work with us to achieve our non-proliferation goals, which could lead to a waiver of the sanctions that have been imposed on the Pakistani entity."

Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen also pledged following to work together to establish an international ban on the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons.

## PM asks co-ops to guard against corruption

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday emphasised the importance of skilled and democratic management in cooperative institutions for socio-economic development of the poor, reports UNB.

"Cooperatives have bright prospects in our economic and social sectors. But we're yet to get the expected success in cooperatives due to mismanagement and corruption of the past," she said.

She called for consolidating the cooperatives management, infusing dynamism in the societies through relentless work to make the cooperatives movement a success.

The Prime Minister was addressing an award giving ceremony of cooperative societies at Osmani Memorial auditorium in the city yesterday morning.

## HC issues Rule Nisi on govt

By Staff Correspondent

The High Court yesterday issued a Rule Nisi on the government to show cause as to why the agreement reached between the Health Minister and the Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) in January last should not be implemented.

The rule was issued by the vacation bench of the High Court, comprising Justice M Mozammel Haque and Justice Badrul Islam Chowdhury in response to a writ petition by Dr M A Majed, President of the BMA. The court made the rule returnable within four weeks.

Earlier Tuesday, the High Court issued a mandatory injunction on the BMA ordering immediate withdrawal of the

## Twin-murder: Nilufar's husband interrogated

By Staff Correspondent

Detective police yesterday started gross checking the confessional statements by maid Romena the sole suspect in the grisly twin-murder at Lalmatia in the city Sunday.

Police also interrogated the victims' family members including late Nilufar Chowdhury's husband Amin Uddin Chowdhury.

Meanwhile, three brothers-in-law of Romena alias Nomi — Jahiruddin, Hasem Ali and Nabu Sheikh and a cousin Dilip Sheikh — who were earlier picked up to help trace out Romena, were released from the Detective Branch (DB) custody yesterday.

"We have arrested the prime suspect and now our investigation has started. We're still looking into the motive behind the double murder," said a senior DB official.

Romena, as she said, murdered both the mother and her daughter since she was subjected to scolding by them, but we still believe it is too trifling to commit such crime.

Meanwhile, a police press

## Six killed on Dhaka-Aricha highway

By Our Correspondent

GAZIPUR, Oct 6: Six persons were killed and thirty others injured in two accidents on the Dhaka-Aricha highway today.

Three persons died and 20 were injured during a head-on collision between a bus and a microbus while three others were run over by a minibus.

A young man Faruk (22), along with his niece Ratna (6), died on the spot when they were struck by a Dhaka-bound minibus while trying to cross the highway near the Public Administration Training Centre (PATC) at around 11 am.

In a mad rush to escape, the bus driver hit a rickshaw, killing the rickshawpuller Bachchu on the spot. Abdul Mannan, the bus driver, was later arrested by Savar police.

In another accident, two passengers died on the spot while 11 others were injured when a Dhaka-bound microbus collided with a Jessore-bound bus near Hemayetpur at around 9:30 am.

One of the injured passenger died while being shifted to a hospital in the city.