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NEWS BRIEFS

Khaleda, Hasina shocked

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday condoled the loss of valuable lives and property in Southern Egypt. In separate messages sent to Egyptian President Mohammed Hosni Mubarak, they said, "We are deeply shocked and grieved to learn about the loss of valuable lives and property caused by the devastating blaze in Southern Egypt," reports UNB.

Pvt pry teachers' memo to PM

A delegation of the Bangladesh Private Primary School Teachers' Association submitted a memorandum to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday afternoon, reports BSS.

Hasina goes to Tungipara today

Awami League president and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina will leave Dhaka today to offer *fateha* at her father's mazar in Tungipara. She will return to Dhaka tomorrow, reports UNB.

Italian envoy hosts reception

Ambassador of Italy to Bangladesh, Claudio Pacifico, held a reception in Dhaka yesterday evening in observance of the National Day of Italy. The reception was attended by ministers, political leaders, civil and military officers, journalists, diplomats and elite of the city, reports BSS.

College student held with heroin

BRAHMANBARIA. Nov 3: Police rounded up a student from the Ashuganj Ferry Ghat on Monday and seized 500 gram heroin worth Tk 60 lakh from his possession. He was identified as Joyal Abedin, a resident of village Chanderkandi in Raipura thana of Narsingdi District and 3rd year (honours) student of Islamic Studies of the Jagannath University College, reports UNB.

Opposition's 'no' to BNP formula

By Staff Correspondent

The Commonwealth-mediated government-Opposition dialogue yesterday faced a fresh hurdle after the Opposition officially rejected the ruling BNP's compromise formula regarding a caretaker government.

Government negotiators had Saturday suggested an interim administration ahead of the next general elections to be headed by the incumbent Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. The plan, envisaging a nine-member "mini-cabinet", also provided for the inclusion of Opposition members of the current Parliament in power-sharing arrangement.

But Opposition delegates to

the talks, which have been suspended since Saturday, rejected the formula yesterday, saying polls under such a government could not be free and fair.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Abdus Samad Azad communicated the Opposition position to Sir Ninian Stephen, the Commonwealth Secretary General's envoy who is in the city to facilitate the dialogue, at the state guest house Meghna yesterday evening.

S A M S Kibria, political advisor to the Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina, accompanied Samad Azad.

According to sources in the Opposition camp, Samad Azad

also handed over a copy of the Opposition's own caretaker government formula to Sir Ninian.

In it, the Opposition is learnt to have made a departure from its original plan — announced on June 27 last — for constituting a caretaker government without any representation from the ruling party, the sources said.

"But there has been no fundamental change in the Opposition plan," an Awami League leader told this correspondent. He refused to elaborate.

Meanwhile, senior government leaders yesterday rejected any possibility of conceding to the Opposition demand for a

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Opposition doesn't want to share power : Hasina

Sheikh Hasina yesterday spurned the ruling party proposal for a national government with Opposition representation in it to conduct Parliament elections, reports UNB.

"We don't want to share power," said the Leader of the Opposition, in an apparent reference to the offer handed to her political adviser in writing on Tuesday by Christopher Childs, an aide of Commonwealth envoy Sir Ninian Ste-

phen mediating the government-Opposition dialogue.

The compromise formula of the BNP on the Opposition demand for a caretaker government outlined the national government as a mini-cabinet under Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia with members drawn from among the MPs of the outgoing Parliament.

Hasina categorically said the BNP had totally lost its credibility with the people and

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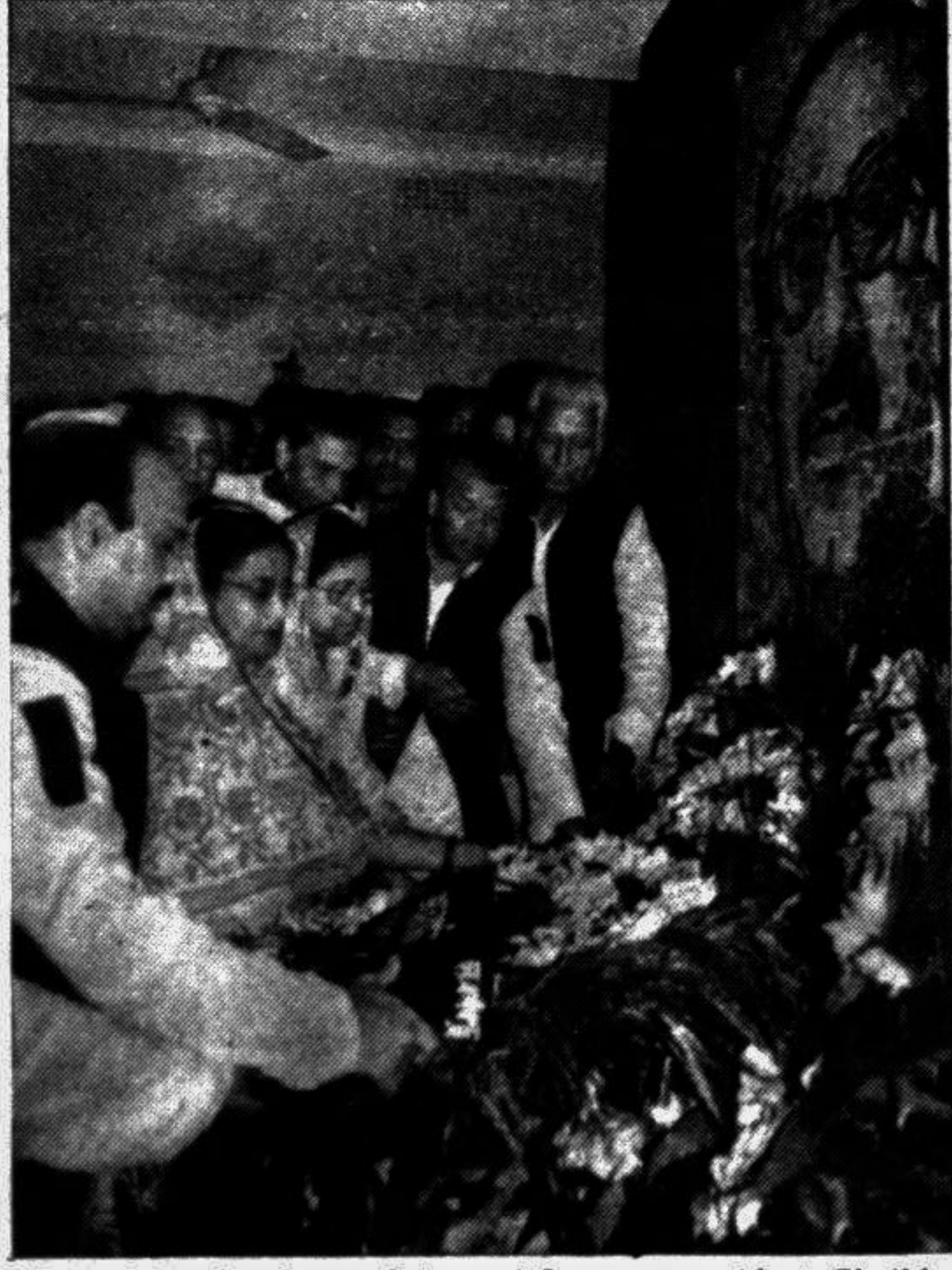
Jail Killing Day observed

By Staff Correspondent

'Jail Killing Day' was observed yesterday by the Awami League and its front organizations with a pledge to safeguard the country's independence.

On this day in 1975, four leaders of the country's glorious War of Independence were slain in their captivity at the Dhaka Central Jail.

Syed Nazrul Islam, Acting President of the provisional government formed in exile during the Liberation War,



Opposition Leader and Awami League president Sheikh Hasina, along with other party leaders, placing wreaths at the portrait of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Bangabandhu Bhaban in Dhanmondi in the city yesterday to mark the Jail Killing Day.

Editorial on page 4

Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmed, Finance Minister M Mansur Ali and Home Minister A H M Kamruzzaman were murdered by a group of disgruntled military personnel in the early hours of November 3.

The provisional government, formed in India in April 1971, led the Liberation War and wrested the country's independence from Pakistan.

The four were killed 79 days after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family in another military putsch.

The Awami League and its front organisations yesterday observed the day with holding *milad mahfil*, discussion meetings and offering *fateha* at the mazars of the four leaders.

The highlights of the programme also included hoisting of black flags, lowering of the national and the party flag, wearing of black badges and placing of wreaths at the portrait of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the architect of the Liberation War.

At a discussion meeting in the afternoon, Awami League leaders paid homage to the four slain leaders and demanded trial and punishment of the killers of the Bangabandhu and his followers.

Addressing the meeting, Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina said, "only a democratic and elected government" could

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Prime Minister indisposed

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has been suffering from high fever with cold during the past two days, forcing her to reschedule appointments, a PM's Office source said.

"She could not attend office of any scheduled programme yesterday and today because of a high fever," one source said.

One senior cabinet minister confirmed her indisposition and said the Prime Minister was feeling unwell since Tuesday when she inaugurated the Meghna-Gumti bridge.

Her personal physician has advised complete rest for a couple of days.

Prisoner killed in foiled jailbreak at Narsingdi

NARSINGDI. Nov 3: A fierce clash Wednesday night between prisoners and guards of the Narsingdi jail left one person dead and eight others injured, police and hospital sources here said, reports UNB.

The clash occurred after nine prisoners had tried to escape from the jail by cutting the iron bars of their prison cells with hack-saw blades at about 11:30 pm.

Jail guards resorted to baton charge to thwart the fleeing prisoners, who retaliated by attacking with iron rods, chains and sticks. Seven prisoners and two guards were injured in the melee.

Of the injured prisoners, Dilu, 45, succumbed to his injuries.

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THE TALL AND THE SHORT: The tallest entrant of the Miss World contest, Maste Helberg of Germany, 1.85m, and the shortest, Chalorna Freitas of Guam, 1.55m, pose for photographers Wednesday at Sun City before the pageant, set for November 19.

Shantibahini agrees to extend truce until Dec 31

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG. Nov 3: The Shantibahini leaders have reportedly agreed to extend the ceasefire in CHT districts until December 31 as proposed by the government.

The ceasefire now in force there will expire on November 30.

Besides, the next round of peace-talks which was scheduled to be resumed by the first week of this month, may be shifted to the first-half of December.

According to sources, the delay in holding the next round of dialogue is due to preoccupation of government leaders with the current political crisis. The Shantibahini leaders also are reportedly locked in internal feud.

The internecine rivalry in Shantibahini leadership has already led to the house-arrest

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IMF denies Hasina's claim

By Staff Correspondent

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has contradicted Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina's allegations of budgetary misappropriation against the government made at a recent public meeting.

In a letter faxed to The Daily Star, the IMF resident representative said, "With reference to the article in The Daily Star of November 2: 'Hasina threatens at public meeting: Accept demand or MPs will resign en masse', the IMF would like to state that it has made no report which alleges or implies budgetary misappropriations."

The copies of the letter, signed by Shabedine Khenissi and addressed to The Daily Star editor, were also sent to the Managing Directors of the BSS and UNB news agencies.

At a rally at Manik Mia Avenue on Tuesday, Sheikh

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Ashish Kumar Loho dead

Noted film, television, radio and stage artiste Ashish Kumar Loho died of cancer in the pancreas at a city clinic last night, family sources said. He was 57, reports UNB.

Ashish Kumar Loho, who entered the filmworld in 1960, had acted in more than 300 films.

Loho, who became popular as comedian Hira after his role in TV series 'Hira Chuni Panna' of the late 60s, wrote over 100 film scripts and numerous plays.

The late artiste who hailed from Mymensingh left behind his wife, two sons and a host of friends and relations to mourn his death.

The body of Loho will remain at his Green Road residence till 11 am today before cremation.

Saipem kickbacks: 9 top govt officials sued

By Staff Correspondent

Nine senior government officials were sued yesterday for receiving kickbacks by unduly providing financial benefits to the Italian contractor of the North-South gas pipeline, Messers Saipem, thereby causing a loss of 10 million US dollars to the exchequer.

The Bureau of Anti-Corruption yesterday filed a case with the Ramna thana against former Petrobangla chairman M A Lutful Matin, former Petrobangla Director (Operations) and presently officer on special duty (OSD) at the Establishment Ministry M A Maruf Khan, Director, Bangladesh Petroleum Institute M Badruddoza, Director General (Finance) of the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) of Petrobangla A H Nizami, DG (P and D) Titas Gas, PIU Engineering Departmental Chief Mahbubur Rahman, Joint Secretary of the Works Ministry A W Chowdhury, Joint Secretary of the Energy Ministry Lutfur Rahman Chowdhury and Senior Assistant Secretary of the Energy Ministry Abu Alam Md Shahid Khan.

According to the charges, the government incurred a loss of 10 million dollars because the accused officials allegedly resorted to corruption and misuse of power regarding the installation of the North-South gas pipeline of the Petrobangla.

The officials' unduly provided financial benefits to the Italian contractor of the pipeline, which had failed to meet the work deadline, thereby gaining pecuniary benefits from the contractor.

The case states that "Petrobangla signed an agreement with Messers Saipem of Italy on February 5, 1990 as the lowest bidder (Tk 154 crore 21 lakh 5,721.75) to build the 117-mile-long gas pipeline project from Kailashila to Ashuganj via Baniabazar and Rashidpur" in greater Sylhet.

"As per contract, Saipem was supposed to complete the task by April 30, 1991 and was given all types of support from the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) yet it could not begin the scheduled construction works till May '90. In addition, Saipem could not mobilise necessary equipment within the stipulated schedule."

The first information report states that Saipem could not proceed with its work as per its own schedule till April 30, '91, and gave lame excuses for the delay, hiding its own faults.

In April '91, Saipem stopped work and demanded a huge monetary compensation. But the project director T I S N Khan Lodhi rejected the demand, saying it was not correct and, on the other hand, demanded 91 million dollars compensation from Saipem for failing to complete the task on

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Biman flights via Bombay, Delhi resume today

Biman Bangladesh Airlines resumes its flights via Bombay and Delhi from today, a Biman press release said last night, reports BSS.

Biman had earlier suspended its flights to India following a decision by the national anti-plague committee.

Biman has already resumed its Calcutta flights from October 30.

Two Bosnians hijack SAS airliner with 128 aboard

OSLO. Nov 3: An SAS airliner hijacked today in northern Norway landed at around 1630 GMT at Gardemoen airport, north of here, and airport police said the two hijackers were Bosnian nationals, reports AFP.

There were passengers aboard the plane when it was commandeered on a domestic flight from Bardufoss to Oslo.

Gardemoen airport, located some 50 kilometers outside the capital, cancelled all flights, according to the airport manager.

The aircraft was directed to the combined military-civilian runway at one end of the airport, he said.

He could not reveal further operational details.

Police said they did not know the demands of the hijackers.

SAS in Stockholm also said that the hijackers were not Scandinavian.

The plane originally had 123 passengers and six crew members on board, according to Ranaum, although SAS maintains that there were 122 passengers.

Some 45 passengers on board the McDonnell Douglas 82 were released by the hijackers after re-fueling the aircraft, Bodoe police said.

"All the released passengers are currently being questioned by police," Police Chief Superintendent Mertha Ranaum said.

She did not know why the passengers were selected to leave, although one child was among those let go.

There have been contacts with the hijackers, she said, but would not provide details.

The hijackers had requested a technician on board and more fuel before lifting off from Bodoe. It is not yet known whether those demands were met.

Kazi Zafar, 3 others face corruption charge

By Staff Correspondent

The Bureau of anti-corruption yesterday filed a case against former prime minister Kazi Zafar Ahmed and three others for causing a loss of Tk one crore to the Bangladesh National Curriculum and Text Book Board, Dhaka, by misusing powers and violating government rules.

The case, filed with the Motijheel thana, says, former prime minister and education minister Kazi Zafar Ahmed ordered the Board to deposit Tk one crore in a branch of the Bangladesh Commerce and Investment Ltd (BCI) at the request of the then assistant vice president of the BCI, Sagir Ahmed.

As per Kazi Zafar's directives, the then Text Book Board chairman Md Yunus Mia and Member (Finance) Md Khurshid Alam deposited the money in the Bangladesh branch of the bank although there was a government restriction on depositing money in a non-banking body like the BCI, according to the charges filed by the Bureau.

The BCI, now defunct, was a non-banking investment company and the government rule bars depositing money of government, semi-government and autonomous bodies in such an organisation.

While the Board chairman

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Politicians in S Asia abuse strikes, says Asiaweek

Strikes and work stoppages are being used by the politicians of Bangladesh and other South Asian countries for their own causes at the expense of the workers as well as the nation.

"Such misguided work stoppages do little for South Asia's image abroad," said an editorial of the Asiaweek, a prominent Hong Kong-based weekly, in its November 2 issues, reports UNB.

The strikes in Bangladesh and other neighbours shut down stock exchanges and foreign currency markets, not to mention thousands of various businesses, it said.

Quoting official figures, the weekly said that each day workers' failure to show up costs Bangladesh at least 50 million US dollars (approximately Tk 200 million) in lost production.

"And no one can put a price tag on the loss of life that inevitably occurs during such nationwide disorders," the Asiaweek remarked about strike-hit Bangladesh.

It described nationwide strikes as a self-imposed handicap and commented that in a world where capitalism is king, competition for investment has become the name of the game.

The strikes, it said, heighten international perceptions of political instability and economic risk, and deflect capital to rival economies.

They also siphon government attention and resources away from real problems, such as developing the economy and providing for the general welfare of the populace, the weekly observed.

According to Asiaweek, the case for nationwide strikes would be stronger in a non-democratic society, where authorities are unlikely to heed popular demands unless forced to.

But Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, who frequently experience such programmes, have working democratic institutions where grievances can be aired and differences thrashed out, it noted.

"Yet politicians, especially poll losers, insist on bypassing them. They in effect violate one of the fundamental clauses of the democratic contract: Respect for the outcome of elections."

The editorial said the politicians end up encouraging workers to assert their rights irresponsibly. And workers end up helping to subvert the system that guarantees them

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Applications with full Bio-Data and a passport size photograph must reach Box No: S-578, C/o The Daily Star, House-11, Road-3, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka-1205, by 15 November, 1994. Women are specially encouraged to apply. Salary and other benefits according to qualification and experience. Envelopes must be marked "APPLICATION FOR NEWSPAPER EMPLOYMENT."