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NEWS BRIEFS

Degree exams begin today

The Degree (Pass and Subsidiary) Examinations of 1994 under the National University begins today. Assembly of more than four people and movement within 200 yards of 21 degree exam centres in the capital during examination hours have been banned. Dhaka Metropolitan Police announced yesterday. reports UNB.

Soiled one taka notes to be withdrawn

Government has decided to immediately withdraw all soiled one taka notes which are not fit for use and discardable on health grounds, a Bangladesh Bank press release said here yesterday. All concerned have been requested to deposit such notes with any scheduled bank or Bangladesh Bank counter directly by December 31 and replace those with one taka coins, reports BSS.

Dhaka-Russia EMS from tomorrow

Express Mail Service (EMS) will be introduced between Bangladesh and the Russian Federation from tomorrow. An official announcement said yesterday this service would cover Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna and other major towns of the country, reports UNB.

Sircar meets Emeka

ISLAMABAD, Nov 29: Bangladesh Education Minister Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar, now attending the Commonwealth Education Ministers conference in Islamabad, called on Commonwealth Secretary General Chief Emeka Anyaoku here today. reports BSS.

Barricade by Opposition disrupts life

By Staff Correspondent

Thousands of people remained stranded across the country yesterday following the rail and road barricade programme enforced by the three major opposition parties in Parliament.

Barring some sporadic clashes which left scores of people injured outside Dhaka, the protest programme was generally peaceful.

Life in the capital and other major cities slowed down with motor vehicles mostly remaining off the roads during the day-long agitation. Schools were shut but private and government offices stayed open.

The Kamalapur railway station, the country's busiest, was rendered inoperative from around 9 in the morning as pickets blocked both incoming and outgoing trains at different points in and outside the city.

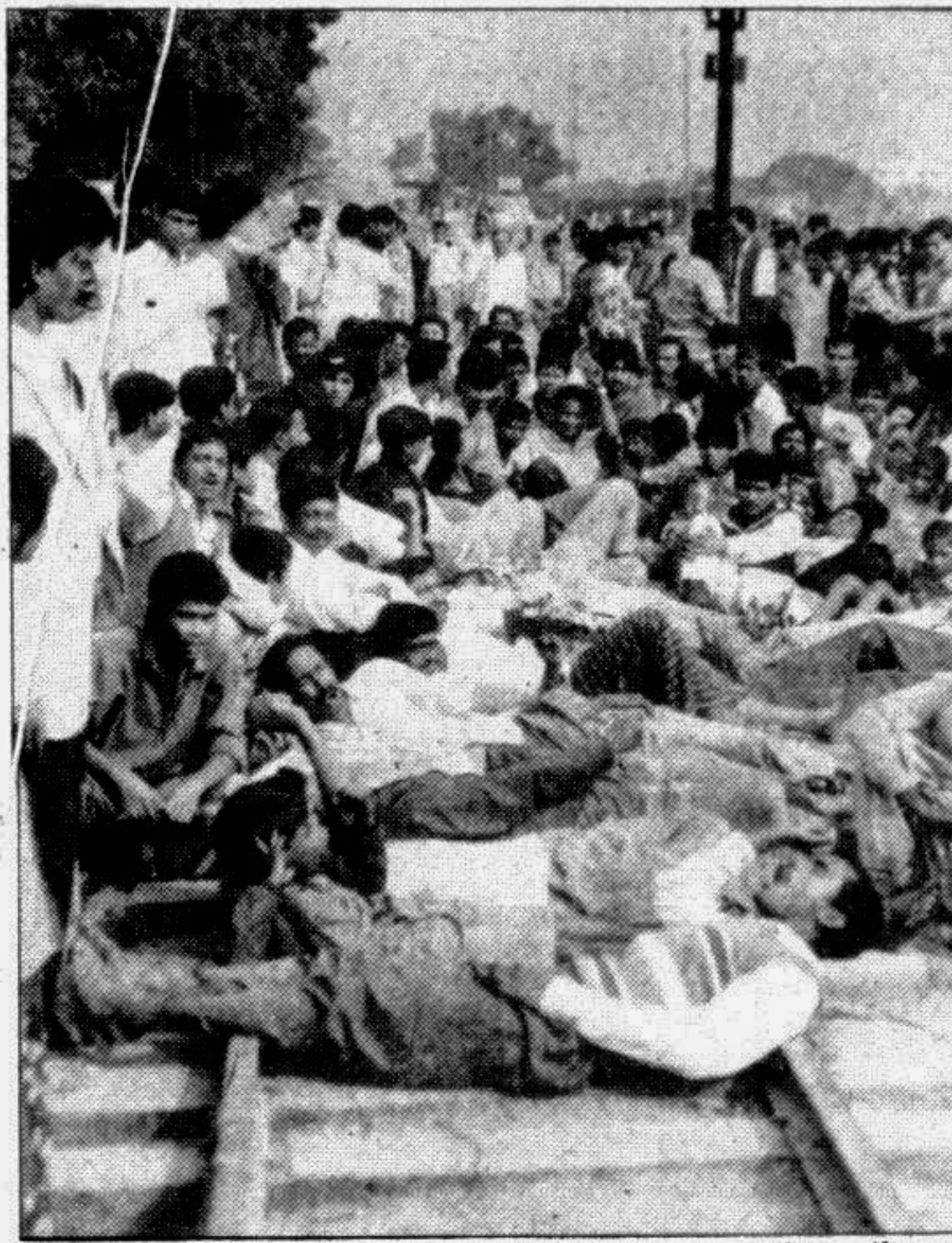
According to a Railway source, some one lakh people travel by nearly 280 trains every day.

All inter-district bus terminals throughout the country remained closed for the day. Several thousand people were seen waiting for the end of the Opposition's programme which lasted until dusk.

Three opposition parties—Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami—announced the programme in concert to force the BNP government to accept their demand for holding the next national polls under a neutral, caretaker government.

Only three trains could reach Dhaka yesterday. Seven other trains had left Kamalapur before nine in the morning out of which three were observed.

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Opposition activists lying and squatting on the railway track at Tongi station outside the capital to enforce a road-rail barricade programme yesterday. — Star photo



Opposition supporters yesterday placed rails across the tracks at the Tongi railway station as part of their road-rail barricade programme. — Star photo

PM's remark at JCD rally surprises Opposition

The Opposition yesterday reacted sharply to Prime Minister's comment that her party's student front is enough to tackle the Opposition agitation, reports UNB.

"We are simply surprised at her remarks. How a Prime Minister can ignore the administration and wants to let loose her student front on the streets to combat the opposition's constitutional agitation, opposition chief whip Mohammad Nasim told reporters at the Sangsad Bhavan.

The reaction was vented after a meeting of the leaders of opposition parliamentary groups campaigning for election under a neutral caretaker government.

Deputy leader of the Opposi-

sition Abdus Samad Azad presided over the meeting. It was attended by Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, Tofael Ahmed, Matia Chowdhury, Suranjit Sengupta, Sheikh Harunur Rashid, S S Halder and Dr Mizanul Huq of Awami League, Barrister Moudud Ahmed and Anwar Hossain Marju of Jatiya Party, Sakhawat Hossain and Enamul Huq of Jamaat-e-Islami and Salahuddin Kader Chowdhury of NDP.

Giving the reaction to the PM's speech, Nasim said people had expected that the Prime Minister, in her address, would speak of various problems of the students session jam, price hike of newsprint and campus violence.

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BNPPP discusses strategies to face Opposition

The BNP Parliamentary Party (BNPPP) meeting yesterday discussed various strategies to politically counter the opposition's anti-government programme, reports BSS.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdus Salam Talukder briefing newsmen after the meeting said, "The political development in the country since our last meeting on November 9 was discussed. The dialogue with the Opposition and Commonwealth Secretary General's envoy Sir Ninian Stephen's proposal in finding out a solution to the political impasse also came up for discussion."

Presided over by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and held in the committee

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EU envoys for early solution

By M Anwarul Haq

Several envoys of European Union countries in Dhaka feel there is now very little chance of any fresh foreign-brokered dialogue following the failure of Sir Ninian's mission. Most believe a domestic settlement, found sooner the better, is the only answer to ending the current impasse.

Top diplomats of the 12-nation European Union countries, speaking to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity, observed that both the ruling party and the Opposition, having adopted inflexible positions, got themselves "more entrenched" in recent days through their "uncompromising public statements."

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Services of 1362 docs to be regularised

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia last night issued directives to solve different problems of the country's doctors including regularisation of all civil surgeons and assistant directors holding current charges, reports BSS.

The Prime Minister also ordered the concerned authorities to regularise the services of 1362 doctors appointed on

ad-hoc basis, exempt all doctors appointed upto tenth BCS from appearing the senior service scale examination and foundation training and promote 2173 doctors to sixth grade from their existing seventh grade.

The directives came when a delegation of the Doctors Association of Bangladesh (DAB) met the Prime Minister at her Parliament office.

The members of the delegation discussed with the Prime Minister problems facing the doctors and thanked her for issuing directives to solve their different problems.

The Prime Minister said medical science is a noble profession and urged the doctors to ensure health services to the country's commonman.

She also asked them to ensure their presence in rural areas so that the commonman could reach the doctors easily and get medical services in time of their needs.

The members of the delegation included Prof Nurul Islam, President of the Paediatrics Association, Dr Prof MA Mannan, president of DAB and

See Page 12 Col 8

Truce in CHT extended

The ceasefire in the three districts of Chittagong Hill Tracts has been extended up to December 31 next, an official handout said here yesterday, reports BSS.

The decision was taken in the light of the government proposal and its acceptance by the Parbatya Chittagong Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS), it added.

Earlier, the ceasefire was extended up to November 30 this year as per the decision arrived at between the Bangladesh government and PCJSS, the handout said.

Team arrives for peace talks

Serbs place missile near Sarajevo airport

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 29: UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali will travel tomorrow to Sarajevo as his organization comes under increasing fire for its inability to stop the Bosnian Serb onslaught in Bihac, reports AFP.

The United Nations chief pleads to meet Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic and Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic to push UN efforts to broker a ceasefire in the region.

Officials with the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) said the Bosnian Serbs appeared to have eased their bombing raids as they considered the UN ceasefire proposal, which has been accepted by the Muslim-led Bosnian government.

Meanwhile, mediators seeking a new path to peace after dramatic fighting in northwest Bosnia arrived in

Sarajevo today for talks with the Bosnian government.

The government was under increasing pressure to accept an overall peace settlement that would clearly seal the Serbs' hold over much of the 70 per cent of Bosnia they now control, and perhaps allow their long-sought confederation with neighbouring Serbia proper.

Representatives of the United States, Russia, Britain, France and Germany flew into the Sarajevo airport unharmed despite reports earlier in the day that Bosnian Serbs had placed a SAM-6 surface-to-air missile nearby.

Lt. Col. Jan-Dirk von Merfeldt, a UN military spokesman, said he had seen recent reports indicating the missile was there.

UN sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said

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Foreign media reports on troops in Bihac 'incorrect'

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh peacekeeping forces now based in besieged Bihac of war-torn Bosnia are in good morale and performing their mandated duties. It was officially stated yesterday.

Briefing newsmen about the role of the Bangladesh troops in the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR), Major General Subid Ali Bhuiyan, Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division, referred to media reports of western agencies and said many of their despatches regarding the situation were not correct.

Major General Bhuiyan mentioned that there was also a wrong impression given by foreign media that Bangladesh had sent troops in a hurry and that the peacekeepers were

not well equipped. The newsmen, who were called to the press briefing at the Prime Minister's office, Armed Forces Division at the Dhaka Cantonment, also got an opportunity to ask over telephone the Bangladesh Commanding Officer in Bihac, Colonel Selim Akhtar, questions about the troops' welfare.

The Bangladesh battalion commander of the UNPROFOR said in reply to a question: "We are in good condition. Our morale is high. Bangladeshi troops are performing their duties."

Speaking in a confident voice, Col Selim replied to all the newsmen's queries on the special telephone link main-

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'Big wave of investments moving towards small S Asian states'

By S Y Bakht

Japanese investment is already trickling into South Asia but the 'big wave' of investments is moving towards other emerging Asian markets, primarily China, Indonesia and Vietnam, observed the visiting senior managing director of Sony Corporation, Jiro Aiko.

In an interview with The Daily Star yesterday, he cautioned that continued political instability may discourage foreign capital from being invested in the country. "Capital is a timid animal. It may be intimidated by very small factors. And strong political fighting (in Bangladesh) may frighten foreign capital away."

Foreign investors started to look into Sri Lanka, he said, but recent political developments in that country may have a negative impact.

"Japanese investment is already trickling into South Asia. But the 'big wave' of investments is not far away. However, it is difficult to de-

fine the exact timing," he added.

A former Japanese ambassador to Kuwait and the Deputy Director General of the powerful Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), Aiko noted that the Japanese companies coming to South Asia are looking into the size of a country's market and thus are attracted towards India.

"The smaller countries of South Asia should pay much attention to the capital flow of Japanese companies into India and take it as a potential opportunity and not as a threat," he said.

He explained that a few years after they are set up in India, the Japanese companies would also set up a supplier network for the manufacturing units and they may be located in the smaller South Asian countries.

He cited Sony Corporation, which 'starts manufacturing operations in India from next

year, as an example. The company, he said, would initially import most of the components from elsewhere as the local ones would not meet the quality standards, but after a few years it would set a network of suppliers in and around India.

However, he pointed out that the other South Asian countries can only benefit from such a move if the trade and other barriers of that country with India are removed.

Aiko also noted that many Japanese businessmen are also paying much attention to Myanmar, but political problems in that country, which the US is very critical about, is holding the Japanese investors back. "But if we see any compromise (between the ruling junta in Myanmar and the pro-democracy opposition) then there will be capital movement like in Vietnam."

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Adhikary takes oath as Nepali PM today

KATHMANDU, Nov 29: Nepal's Communist party leader Manmohan Adhikary said today that King Birendra appointed him as the Himalayan nation's prime minister, reports Reuter.

"I have been appointed as prime minister and I will be sworn in tomorrow," Adhikary told reporters as he left a meeting with the king in the royal palace.

Adhikary's communist Uni-

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233 killed in Chinese dance hall fire

BEIJING, Nov 29: A huge fire gutted a single-storeyed dance hall crowded with weekend revellers in north-eastern China, killing 233 people and injuring 16, local officials said today, reports Reuter.

The fire broke out in the dance hall in the town of Fuxin in northeastern Liaoning province on Sunday afternoon, an official of the Fuxin fire prevention department said by telephone.

He said 233 people — 132 men and 101 women — died in the blaze even though it was extinguished within minutes.

Most of the victims suffocated in heavy smoke and from poisonous fumes believed to have been emitted by building or decoration materials as the fire gutted the 302 sq meter building, the official said.

Firefighters rescued 14 injured from the blazing hall and all were only slightly hurt, he added.

King Hassan's envoy in city

Dr Driss Aloui Adaghri, a special envoy of King Hassan of Morocco, arrived here yesterday to extend an invitation to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to attend the next summit of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) in Casablanca, Morocco, reports BSS.

Dr Adaghri, who is accompanied by his wife, was received at the airport by Food Minister Lt General (ret'd) Mir Shawkat Ali and his wife.

The special envoy, who is the Minister for Youth and Sports of his country, said the government and people of Morocco are eagerly looking forward to the summit.

He told BSS on arrival that he flew in here as the envoy of the King to extend the invitation to the Bangladesh Prime Minister to attend the summit which is taking place at an important time for the Islamic world.

The summit will take place from a December 13-14 and it will be preceded by meeting of the foreign ministers.

Arrest of Byazid's killers demanded

By Staff Correspondent

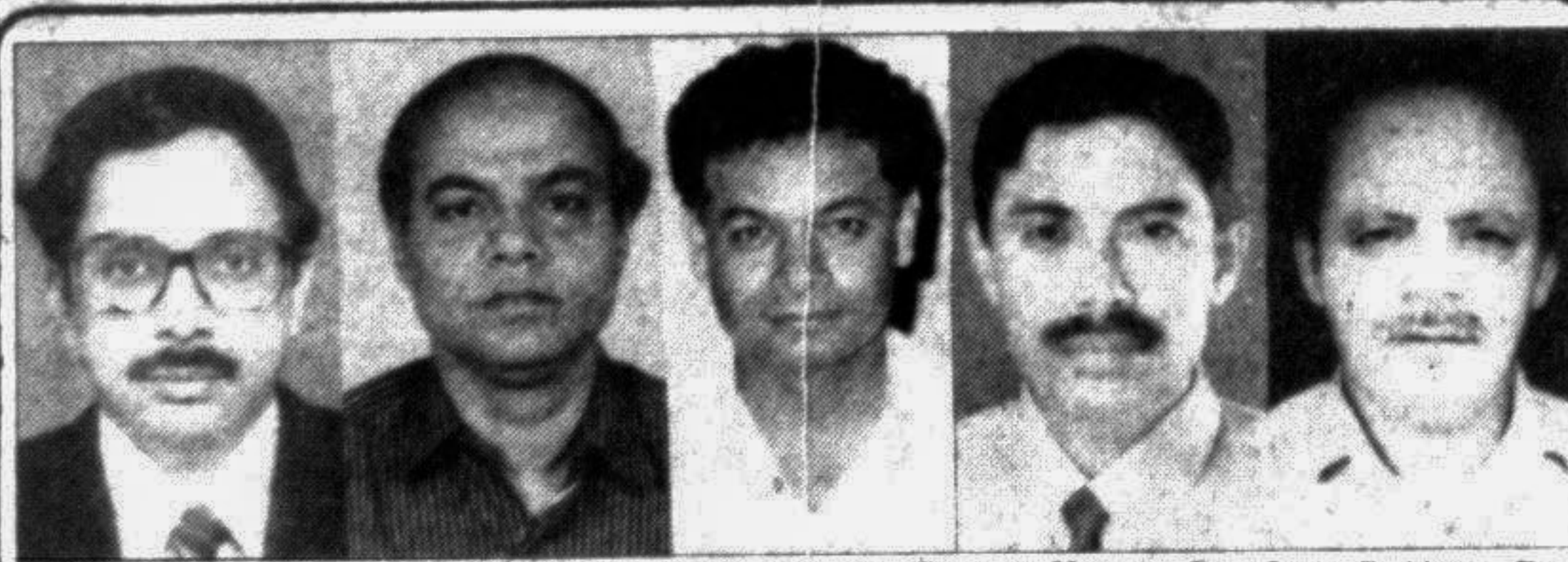
The residents of Nukhet Babupura area in the city brought out a procession yesterday morning to protest the killing of a college teacher in the area Saturday afternoon.

No one had been arrested in connection with the murder till last night, police sources said.

Mir Golam Sarwar Byazid, 35, a lecturer of the Uttara Dakshinkhan Anwara Degree College, was killed by some unidentified gunmen — said to be members of a gang involved in organised crime — behind the Bazme Quadria building at Katabara on Saturday.

Meanwhile, a large number of posters were seen in the area demanding capital punishment for one Majed, a businessman for his alleged involvement in the murder.

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BMA secretary general candidates (from L): Dr. Gazi A Haque, Dr. Qazi S Alam, Dr. Mahbubur R Chowdhury, Dr. Rafique Chowdhury, Dr. A A M Asiqul Alam.

Introducing BMA SG candidates

By Manirul Islam Khan

Nearly twelve thousand doctors across the country will elect a 32-member executive committee of their association for the next two years.

Candidates from five panels are contesting this year's elections which are being fought with unprecedented zeal and enthusiasm.

The Daily Star yesterday interviewed all the five general secretary candidates. Following are the excerpts from those

interviews:
Dr Gazi Abdul Haque, an assistant professor of anatomy, said: "I have tried to realise the 21-point charter of demands of the BMA during my tenure."

"If re-elected, I shall try to complete the incomplete task for the benefit of the doctors along with my executive and central committee colleagues," said the currently serving secretary general who is contesting.

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