

Opposition agitation

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the government and the Opposition until Wednesday...

Meanwhile, a BNP source said the party leadership is reviewing the situation to decide on a strategy to face the Opposition challenge.

The Speaker was expected to give decision Wednesday last on the en masse resignations of the Opposition MPs...

On January 19, the mainstream opposition — comprising the AL, the Jatiya Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami — is scheduled to enforce a country-wide road and railway blockade in support of their demand.

The AL leader said the future agitation programme is likely to include a two-day hartal, sometime during the last week of January.

Bank guard killed

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Azizur Rahman Khan, whose father Shamsur Rahman, was also a guard of the same branch, used to live in AGM Baki Billah's office room...

police said they might transfer the case to the Detective Branch (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

When this correspondent visited the bank branch yesterday, AGM Baki Billah was not there and other officers and employees of the branch declined to say anything.

Some bank staff said that it was almost impossible to break open a bank vault with a drilling machine within a few hours.

A similar incident happened at the Sonali Bank's Bangabandhu Avenue branch where the body of the guard was found along with that of a prostitute inside the bank premises.

Gulf compensation

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62,000 affected persons who were compelled to return home due to the Gulf War.

rect meetings were held between minister and high officials and the UN Commission in different times.

The handout said the Commission had considered 68 applications of 'B' category (for dead and injured) and informed that these 68 persons would receive compensation worth US dollars, 287,500 in all subject to availability of the amount by the Commission.

The handout categorically pointed out that the amount of compensation would only be possible to pay after the withdrawal of UN sanction on Iraq and deposition of certain amount of money to be realised from the sales of Iraqi petroleum in the account of the Commission.

Lankan peace talks deadlocked

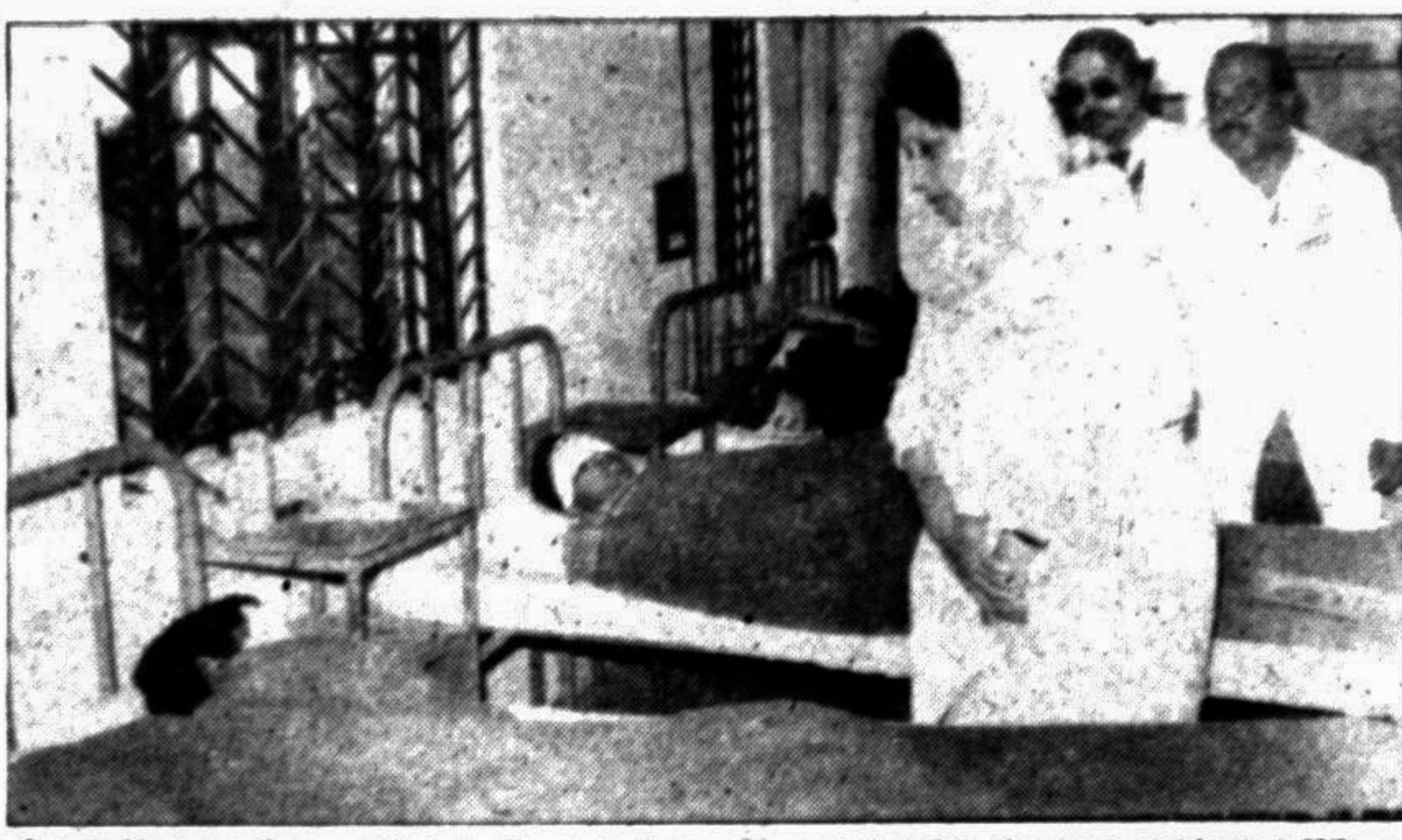
COLOMBO, Jan 14: Government negotiators and Tamil rebels who met in Sri Lanka's northern region today said there was a deadlock on future talks for a political settlement leading to an end to the rebels' 12-year war, reports Reuters.

Officials from both sides said the government wanted to start talks next month while the rebels wanted a land route to the north to be opened and an economic embargo in the same region lifted before talks commenced.

Government negotiators flew to the rebel-controlled town of Jaffna on Saturday for a third round of talks with Tamil rebels to review the truce and set dates to discuss a political settlement.

Journalists accompanying the government team to Jaffna were told by spokesmen from both sides that the two-week truce would be allowed to continue after January 22 when it was to come under review.

But the main agenda points at Saturday's meeting with a rebel team, led by Tamil Chelvan, head of the political sec-



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia visited the persons injured in the train accident at Hill at the Dinajpur Sadar Hospital yesterday.

PM orders

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came to inspect the damages. Communications Minister Oli Ahmed, Education Minister Jamruddin Sircar, State Minister for Land Kabir Hossain and local PMs accompanied the Prime Minister who also witnessed rescue operation.

The Prime Minister, after inspecting the scene of accident, drove to the Hakimpur Thana Health Complex where 12 wounded are being treated. As many as 19 bodies were kept at the compound of the health complex. Begum Zia prayed for the victims.

Later, she also visited three other hospitals — Zai Birampur, Dinajpur and Jajpurhat — to be by the side of the wounded victims of Friday's accident one of the world's railway disasters in recent years.

The Prime Minister walked about in the casualty wards of the hospitals and enquired the condition of the injured. She also enquired about their treatment and availability of medicines.

On her way back from Dinajpur, Begum Zia stopped at Jajpurhat to see the condition of those undergoing treatment at the general hospital there.

Faulty signalling system

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and setting the lines seemed to have made the mistake of signaling without setting the lines for the express train first.

At approximately 30-40 miles an hour, the express train rumbled into the waiting train, causing the disaster which until last night had claimed at least 25 lives.

The moment a train approaches, the Relay Interlocking System activates automatically. The signals cannot be turned green until proper setting has been made at the points for the incoming train.

Any human failure to act will automatically send a red signal at the outer zone, stopping the incoming train.

Now the question arises why then the tragic incident took place at Hill.

According to initial findings by the BR officials, the local 511 down train arrived at Hill three hours late. It was accommodated on the loop line so that the express train could use the main line to speed past.

While doing this the workmen, apparently by mistake, set all the track points for the local train to carry on with its journey.

Stranded Pakistanis may court arrest

By Staff Correspondent
The stranded Pakistanis in the city have decided to court arrest on January 31 if no date is announced by then for starting their repatriation.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Stranded Pakistanis General Repatriation Committee (SPGRC) held with Aijaz M Nasim Khan in the chair recently, says a press release.

They also resolved to implement the programme of self-immolation both inside jails and camps of stranded Pakistanis to coincide with the programme of courting arrest.

They requested the government of Bangladesh and Pakistan to announce a date for resuming their repatriation so that they are not compelled to go for self-immolation.

British foreign secretary likely to stay on

LONDON, Jan 14: Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd is poised to make clear he is likely to stay on at his post beyond this summer. The Times said today, despite earlier reports he was eager to step down, reports AFP.

Hurd has written an article to be distributed to his constituency party workers in which he is expected to say that he has enough work to keep him busy for the foreseeable future, said the paper.

In his article he is expected to tell his constituency that he wants to carry through tasks of handling Britain's involvement in moves aimed at ending the Bosnia crisis, preparing for next year's inter-governmental conference on the future of the European Union and managing Britain's responsibility for Hong Kong in the run-up to the handover to China in 1997.

None of these responsibilities seems likely to be completed within six months and the likelihood is growing that he will stay on until the end of this parliament, said the paper.

A decision by Hurd, who will be 65 in March, to stay on would doubtless come as a big relief to Conservative Prime Minister John Major, who is anxious not to lose his most senior and experienced cabinet colleague.

The number of voters in Tongi Pourashaba has declined by as many as 35,000 from that in the voters' list of 1992.

Death toll 25, says Rly

From Page 1 Col 4
The express train which should have passed the station on a second line, ran on the wrong tracks and hit the waiting train.

Traffic communication between Syedpur and Dinajpur was restored at 7:25 am Sunday.

Two relief trains — one from Syedpur and the other from Ishurdi — rushed to the spot to join an intensive salvage operation.

Relief trains equipped with derricks arrived at the spot while Railway engineers and technicians were seen cutting the wrecked coaches to clear the tracks.

An army battalion from Bogra and Rangpur cantonments, local police and ansars joined the rescue operation.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday made a whirlwind visit to the spot and went to different hospitals and clinics to see the injured.

During the visit, Begum Zia ordered and enquiry, fix the responsibility and take stern action against those involved.

She was accompanied by Communications Minister Oli Ahmed, Education Minister



Pope John Paul II blesses the congregation from the altar decorated with local bamboo and flowers at the start of Mass yesterday on the grounds of the Philippines International Convention Centre. A crowd of approximately half a million came to see the Pope and celebrate Mass. — AFP photo

Ershad's trial adjourned

The framing of charge against deposed president Hussain Muhammad Ershad in a corruption case involving procurement of ENG (Electronic News Gathering) equipment was adjourned yesterday following a defence petition.

Divisional Special Judge Ansaruddin Sikder also allowed the defence attorneys to see their client in jail. He instructed the authorities concerned to make necessary arrangements so that Khandakar Mahbub Hossain and Yusuf Hossain Humayun, the two defence lawyers, can see Ershad before February 1, the next date of hearing.

KH. Mahbub Hossain, in a petition, stated that the defence was yet to receive the necessary papers of the case into which further investigations had been ordered.

Divisional Special Public Prosecutor Ashrafuddin Ahmed objected to the defence's contention, saying that they could easily have procured those if they had tried to. The judge also noted that the defence did not bring the matter to his notice. He asked the defence to report to him if they face any difficulty in getting the necessary papers.

Ershad is the lone accused in this case, known as Special case No 34 of 1993, which came up for hearing in September 1993.

Subsequently, on a petition from the prosecution, the court ordered reinvestigation in May last year. A fresh chargesheet was submitted in October last.

According to the first information report in November 1988 Ershad abused his official position and directed that television cameras, accessories and vehicles be procured for prompt coverage of his own and his wife Raushan Ershad's activities thereby causing the state to suffer a loss of Taka 2.93 crore including Taka 1.65 crore in foreign exchange.

Quazi Golam Faruque, assistant public prosecutor, stood for the state alongside Ashrafuddin Ahmed.

Cultural Ministry to host reception for Dilip, Saira

Renowned film actor of the sub-continent Dilip Kumar (Yusuf Khan) and his wife Saira Banu will be cordially received during their stay in Bangladesh, reports BSS.

A meeting was held in this connection at the Cultural Ministry with State Minister for Culture Prof Jahan Ara Begum in the chair.

The meeting was informed that Dilip Kumar and his wife were likely to arrive in the city on January 22 at 12.50 pm by Bangladesh Biman. During their six-day stay in Bangladesh, the Cultural Ministry and different cultural organisations will accord them receptions.

The meeting was attended, among others, by Nurul Huda MP, Amanullah Chowdhury MP, Shamsun Nahar Ahmed MP, Cultural Secretary Mokhlisur Rahman and Director General of Bangla Academy Prof Harun-ur-Rashid.

Besides, Bangladesh Railway would bear all cost of treatment of the injured, BR sources said.

Railway Secretary Dr M Mashur Rahman was in Parbatipur to oversee the salvage operation.

This is the first major train accident of this year. In the first six months of 1994, 13 train accidents took place in the country that left 22 dead.

The worst train accident in the last 10 years occurred on January 15, 1988 in which 77 people died.

Dainik Barta reappears today

RAJSHAHI, Jan 14: Dainik Barta will resume its publication tomorrow from here after a gap of six years, reports BSS.

State Minister for Social Welfare Fazlur Rahman formally launched the re-publication of Dainik Barta at a simple ceremony held at Barta Bhaban here this afternoon.

Presided over by Emran Ali Sarkar, Chairman of the Trustee Board of the paper, the function was also addressed, among others, by the Mayor of Rajshahi City Corporation Mizanur Rahman Minu, Lutfunnessa Hossain MP, Dr. Ekram Hossain, Information Secretary, Prof Yusuf Ali, Vice Chancellor, Rajshahi University and Qumrul Munir, Editor of the paper.

JCD, Chhatra Samaj clash in Manikganj

MANIKGANJ, Jan 14: Ten people were injured in a clash between supporters of the BNP-backed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and pro-JP Jatiya Chhatra Samaj at a local college today over its students' union election, reports UNB.

The Midnight File

Iran warns Israel against military action

NICOSIA (Cyprus), Jan 14: Iran warned Israel Saturday against launching military action to counter Tehran's alleged efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. Tehran Radio quoted a senior military official as saying any military move against Iran will be countered by a definite riposte and will result in regret by the incursive enemy, reports AP.

Shell kills 4 in Bihar

ZAGREB, Jan 14: Four people were killed and at least four wounded by a single shell which slammed into Bihar town in northwestern Bosnia around noon today, following a night of heavy shelling, a UN spokesman said. "Four people were killed and at least four injured by a single impact around noon near the bridge in Bihar town," a UN spokesman, Chris Guinness, told Reuters. He said the UN was still trying to find out where the shell was fired from, reports Reuter.

Efforts on to patch up rift in Congress (I)

NEW DELHI, Jan 14: India's ruling Congress (I) party is trying to patch up a leadership rift in a desperate bid to project a united front for crucial state polls starting next month, party sources said today, reports AFP.

Senior party leaders were mediating to try to bring about a rapprochement between Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao and his main foe in the 109-year-old Congress, Arjun Singh.

Efforts are on to patch up the differences, Congress spokesman Vithal Gadgil told AFP. "Some people are making concerted efforts to bring about unity in the party."

"It will take some time, but I am hopeful," he added.

The moves came as Sonia Gandhi, widow of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, indicated that she may not be averse to a political career, by denouncing the comments of a family friend who had said she would never take to politics.

Dissidents in the Congress have been urging the charismatic Sonia Gandhi, 47, to enter politics since Arjun Singh quit Rao's cabinet on December 24 and launched an open revolt against the 73-year-old prime minister.

Newspapers, said Narain Dutt Tiwari, a prominent dissident, had met other Rao critics in the party as well as the Prime Minister himself in recent days in an attempt to bring peace between the warring factions.

"Only a united leadership that accommodates all shades of opinion will be able to save the party," said AK Antony, a respected Congress leader who also resigned from the government last month.

Antony, who has refused to join Rao supporters who want Arjun Singh sacked from the party, said in the southern city of Trivandrum: "I am for unity, the collective strength of the leaders is our strength."

Gadgil, who is close to Rao, said: "The general mood among Congress MPs and members is that there should be an early patchup (between Rao and Arjun Singh). Otherwise, it would be dangerous for the party."

Congress sources said continued infighting in the party or a leadership change now would jeopardise the government's sweeping economic reforms begun by Rao after he took office in June 1991.

The Congress also feared that the leadership tussle might harm the party's prospects in staggered elections in six Indian states due in February and March, polls seen as a crucial test for the beleaguered Rao.

Georgian nationalists vow to free Abkhazia

IBILISI, Jan 14: Inspired by Russia's assault on Chechnya, about 1,000 heavily armed Georgian nationalists have headed toward the breakaway region of Abkhazia Friday and later clashed with Georgian government forces, reports AP.

At least five nationalists were wounded in a shootout with security and police officers, a government spokesman said.

The nationalists were led by former Defence Minister Tengiz Kitovani and former Prime Minister Tengiz Sigua. At a rally Friday morning the two vowed to "liberate" Abkhazia.

Sigua said the force, accompanied by three armoured vehicles, planned to take up position near the border town of Zugdidi and demand the return of refugees from the Abkhazian conflict.

"If they refuse again, then we'll have to use military force," Sigua warned.

The conflict began in 1992 when Georgian government forces commanded by Kitovani tried to quell the separatist movement in Abkhazia, a fertile Black Sea province. The Abkhazians drove the Georgians but in the fall of 1993.

A shaky truce, monitored by about 3,000 Russian peace-

keepers and 150 United Nations observers, has been in place since then. However, Abkhazian authorities have failed to honour agreements to allow an estimated 250,000 ethnic Georgians to return.

"I promised I will liberate Abkhazia, and I keep my word," Kitovani told the rally in Tbilisi, the Georgian capital. "If anybody stops me now... a civil war will start in Georgia."

"If Russia has the right to defend its territorial integrity, why can't Georgian do the same," Kitovani added.