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NEWS BRIEFS

Depression over Bay likely

A monsoon-depression is likely to be formed over the Bay of Bengal during the current month, a Met Office long-range forecast said yesterday. The Ganges basin may experience flood, slightly above normal, during the first half of the current month, the forecast added, reports UNB.

3 injured in Ctg gunfight

CHITTAGONG, Sept 2: Three people received bullet injuries in a clash between two groups of people over land dispute in the port city today. Witnesses said the rival groups exchanged several rounds of gunshots at Chandgaon in the city during the clash that erupted at about 3:00 pm. Seriously injured Ismail, 40, Azizur Rahman, 24, and Imran, 14, were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH), reports UNB.

Goods worth Tk 2 lakh looted

From Our Correspondent
 COX'S BAZAR, Sep 2: Dacoits looted goods worth about Tk two lakh here early today. Six persons were also injured. In the first robbery at Tara Boniarchar road, a group of about 10 armed men attacked two houses, hurled crackers and assaulted five persons at about 3:00 am. They looted gold ornaments and snatched money at gun point.

Italian shot dead in Algeria

ALGIERS, Sept 2: An Italian national was shot dead at Canastel, near the Algerian city of Oran today, officials said. Angelo Gazzevoli, 53, was employed as a technician by a private Algerian textile company, reports AFP.

50 injured in sporadic clashes First day of hartal passes off

The first day of the 32-hour countrywide hartal called by the major opposition parties passed off by and large peacefully yesterday, barring sporadic clashes at several places.

At least 50 people were injured in the clashes. Clashes were reported from Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Kishoreganj, Gazipur, Chandpur and Narayanganj while the TNO office at Belkuchi in Sirajganj district was attacked by pickets.

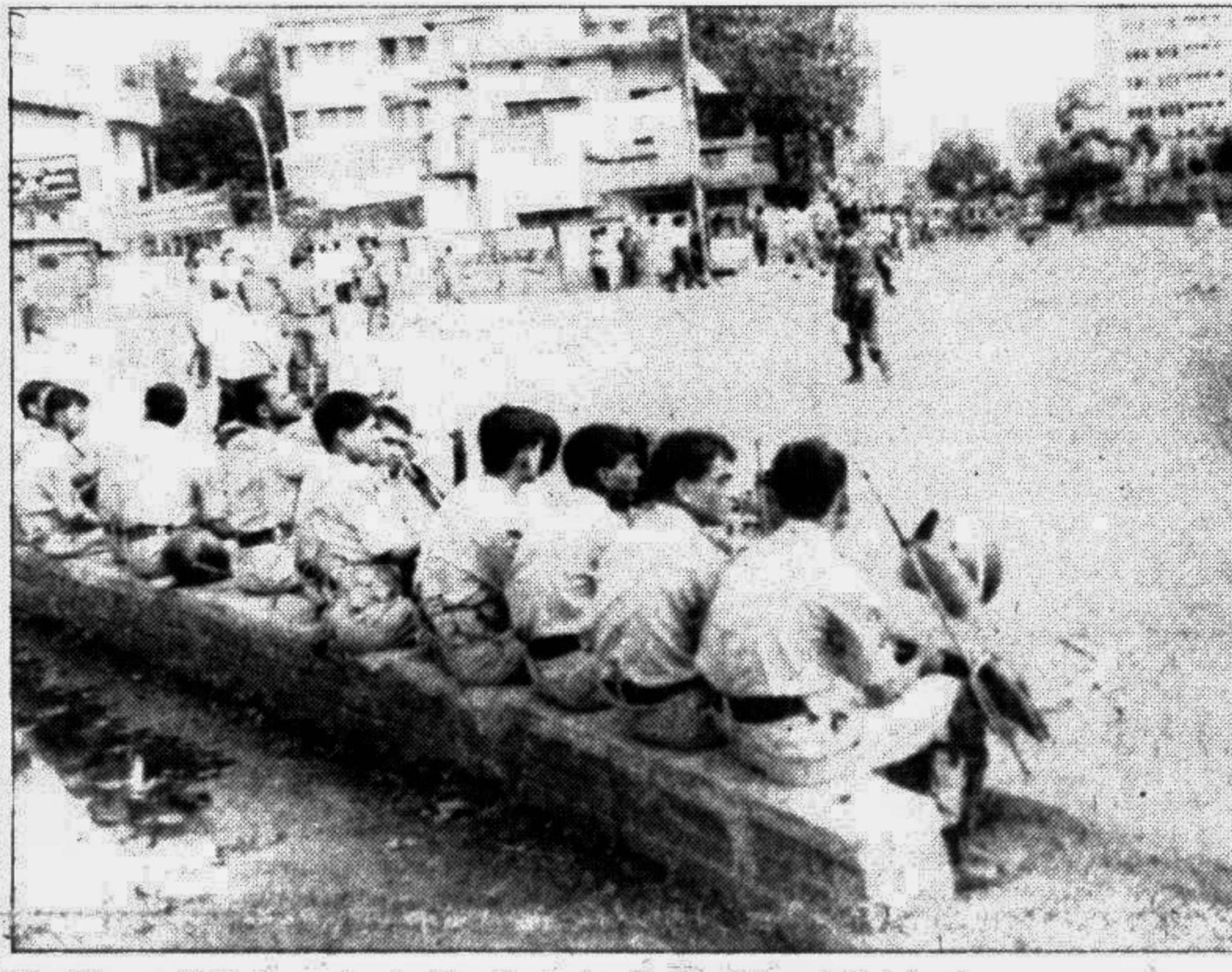
A few clashes also took place in the capital. News agency reports said police picked up nine pickets, including a ward commissioner and three Chhatra League activists.

Normal life was paralysed and most economic activities were suspended during the shutdown, which will continue till 2 pm today.

Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami called the hartal demanding immediate holding of general elections under a caretaker government and to protest the recent police action in Dhaka and Dinajpur.

In Gazipur, at least three persons of a ceramic factory were injured when several crackers were exploded and shots fired by a group of youths at about noon. The injured — Maminul Haq, Mujibur and Ashraf — were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

In Narayanganj, at least 35 persons including a police constable were injured in clashes between pro-hartal and anti-hartal activists. A number of bombs was exploded and shots fired during



The Purana Paltan crossing in the city during the hartal period yesterday.

AL, JP, Jamaat to announce their next programmes at today's rallies

By Staff Correspondent
 The major opposition political parties — the Awami League, Jatiya Party (JP) and Jamaat-e-Islami would announce their next course of agitation at their post-hartal rallies in the city today, sources said.

A 32-hour countrywide hartal called by the Opposition ends at 2 pm today.

The AL will hold its rally at Bangabandhu Avenue, while the JP and Jamaat-e-Islami will hold their rallies at Shapla Chattar and north gate of Baitul Mukarram mosque respectively.

Addressing a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday, the AL leader Sheikh Hasina said the party would announce its next course of action.



An Iraqi delegate to the Women's NGO Forum (C) argues with compatriot Thaer Alhaidari (L) about the cause of the decline of living standards in Iraq on Friday at the venue site in Huairou. The heated debate revolved around environmental and religious conditions in their country.

Surveillance, harassment alleged NGO Forum's 24-hr deadline to China

HUAIROU (China), Sept 2: An international grassroots women's forum today gave China a 24-hour ultimatum to end surveillance and harassment of participants or it would consider shutting down the meeting, reports Reuter.

The Chinese authorities have been given until midday tomorrow (Sunday) to comply with an agreement under which they must stop surveillance and harassment, said Irene Santiago, Executive Director of the Non-governmental Organisations Forum on Women.

"We will go back to our constituencies to discuss appropriate action," she told a news conference. "We are going to make this work despite difficulties."

The 22-member facilitating committee of the Forum met for two hours with an eight-member Chinese team today to demand a halt to harassment and surveillance.

The committee said they had received assurances from the Chinese that inside the 42-hectares of the Forum, people would be totally free to carry on their activities without security, censorship or surveillance.

"We've given them a deadline of 24 hours," said committee member Salamo Fulvai, Pacific director of the YWCA.

She said they would then go back to their delegations and ask: "Say, what do you want, do you want to cancel, do you want to boycott, do you want to riot... I cannot decide that from here."

PM leaves for Beijing today

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia leaves for Beijing this morning to attend the UN-sponsored Fourth World Conference on Women, reports UNB.

The 12-day conference is beginning tomorrow in the Chinese capital for sensitising the international community to the rights of women and devising action plans for their realisation.

PM's entourage will include Banu Ashraf, MP, Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan, Press Secretary to the PM Mozammel Huq and Director General of the Foreign Ministry Rafique Ahmed Khan.

A separate Bangladesh delegation, headed by State Minister for women Affairs Begum Sarwari Rahman, will also attend the meet.

The 362-point agenda of the biggest-ever women's conference will be discussed.

Weatherill for compromise with Opposition 'Bangladesh can be model with polls under interim govt'

Former Speaker of the House of Commons strongly favoured the concept of neutral interim government, saying Bangladesh would be a global model if it could be introduced.

Yes, I favour this concept said Lord Weatherill in an exclusive talk with United News of Bangladesh (UNB).

Citing the case of England, Weatherill said he agrees with the concept of neutral interim government because in effect it is exactly what does happen in UK.

The Prime Minister calls an election. He goes to the Queen to say that he would like to call election. The Queen requests him to continue as Prime Minister, say, for six weeks, only to do certain essential things to keep the country going. So, in effect, that is called a neutral government.

"There are many many other new democracies, not particular in Eastern Europe but I think older democracies, for whom this is a very very sound and wise idea which they might also wish to copy and adopt, and indeed it might become known as Bangladesh system, a model for the rest of the world."

Lord Weatherill, who had been a Conservative MP for nearly two decades since 1964 and Speaker of the lower house of the British parliament for another decade until his retirement in 1992, was in Dhaka in connection with a seminar organised by the Centre For Analysis and Choice (CAC).

During the talk, he touched upon different aspects of the role of the Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition and Speaker.

In reply to a question, he said, "Unfortunately, parliament in Bangladesh is not functioning because it lacks the essential ingredient of opposition."

"The government is governing, but parliament as such is not functioning... If there is no opposition, parliament is not functioning factually," said the former British Speaker.

The entire opposition has quit Parliament and launched street agitation on demand for general elections under a neutral caretaker government.

Responding to another query, he said the Prime Minister as Leader of the House should attend the question time in Parliament perhaps not twice a week as in UK but at least once a week so the MPs can question her.

He said the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament is the most important person after the Prime Minister and his or her role should be so viewed.

On the role of the Speaker, Weatherill said after election the Speaker should remain absolutely neutral. "I have never ever attended any party meeting (during the tenure as Speaker)."

In reply to a question on the present political spectrum in Bangladesh, Weatherill suggested that the government and the opposition should come to a compromise on the present dispute and hoped that the Opposition would participate in the next elections.

"First thing I assure you that I have certainly not come here to criticise anything that is going on in this country. I have not come here to preach to you anything."

Replying to a question, he said: "As I understand the Prime Minister has offered to resign one month before the elections so that an interim government could be formed."

Continue shut down till 2 pm today: Hasina

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the BNP government to show respect to the opinion of the people and accept the demand for a neutral caretaker government to oversee the next polls, reports UNB.

In a press statement, she thanked the people for making the first day of 32-hour hartal a complete success and urged them to continue the shut down till 2 pm today.

The people again expressed their no-confidence in the government and all-out support to the demand for a neutral caretaker government by observing the country-wide hartal peacefully and spontaneously.

People observed the hartal to establish their rights to vote and food and force this "killer, vote dacoit and corrupt government" to step down for holding parliamentary polls under a caretaker government.

Hasina alleged that the government resorted to torture on the people at different parts of the country. The BNP terrorists attacked people during the peaceful hartal.

She condemned the government for arresting many of her party workers during the hartal hours yesterday across the country. Ward

Autopsy report may be delayed Dinajpur: Probe body to seek 40 days' time

DINAJPUR, Sept 2: The one-member judicial committee probing the death of Yasmin will request the government to extend its time limit from 15 days to 40 days, it said today.

"First I was asked to investigate the unnatural death of Yasmin. Then on August 30, I received another fax from the secretary to probe all the violent incidents in Dinajpur including the killing of seven people by police," Additional District Judge Rafiqul Islam, who comprises the committee, said.

"Fifteen days is too short a time to carry out such an investigation," he added.

"Tomorrow or the day after, I am going to ask for another 25 days to finish my job," the Judge confirmed.

He said he had completed the first phase of investigation into Yasmin's death. But at least three vital witnesses were yet to be traced. The witnesses include a young man who got off the same bus in which Yasmin had travelled from Dhaka, the Judge said. Some people at Dosh-Mile saw the young man talking to Yasmin before she was picked up by police, he said.

Meanwhile, Sazzad Hossain the new SP of Dinajpur said today that the CID yesterday took over the case of Yasmin's unnatural death.

The SP was 'optimistic' about bringing back police in Dinajpur town soon. "We shall replace the 80 policemen in the two thanas and the outposts and the process has already started," he said without elaboration.

Hossain said the police department is also carrying out its own investigation into the Dinajpur incidents.

However, no government agency received the second autopsy report of Yasmin's body till writing of the report. Some top officials said that it might take some time because some 'chemical analysis' has to be done.

Most people talked to in the town today alleged that the government was trying to buy time by delaying the autopsy report and assigning more tasks to the probe body. Many people warned that the people might strongly resist any move to deny justice.

The local press club has taken up steps to protest the attack on five local newspaper offices and the killings including that of Yasmin. Since this morning, all reporters of the town have gone on a 24-hour strike.

Over 40 cargo ships stranded at Ctg port

From Nurul Alam
 CHITTAGONG, Sept 2: Over 40 cargo vessels have become stranded at Chittagong port jetties and at the outer anchorage due to dislocation in loading and unloading caused by hartal, port sources said today.

"It may require three to four days after the end of hartal to overcome the crisis. All the ships waiting for loading and unloading will be detained for 2 to 3 days more," said a senior official of the port.

There has been congestion both at the port jetties and at the outer anchorage for the past few weeks due to equipment shortage and arrival of more foodgrain carrying ships. The hartal has aggravated the situation.

The stranded ships include four container vessels with two thousand containers of imported cargo. The delay in loading and unloading will cost the importers and exporters huge demurrage, he said.

Body to probe 'irregularities' at Sonargaon, Sheraton

The government has set up a two member enquiry committee to probe the reported incidents of financial irregularities and corruptions at the Sheraton and Sonargaon hotels, controlled by Bangladesh Services Limited (BSL) and Hotel International Limited (HIL), reports BSS.

A government handout yesterday said the attention of the government was drawn to a news item published recently in some newspapers about Hotel Sheraton and Hotel Sonargaon. The government feels the need to clarify the position to remove misunderstanding as the news items were "motivated and baseless."

The Hotel Sheraton and the Hotel Sonargaon were being controlled by two companies namely, BSL and HIL. Hotel Inter-Continental managed the BSL-owned Hotel up to 1983. Later, Sheraton Overseas Management

Serbs shell Bihac, Sarajevo

ZAGREB, Sept 2: Fighting erupted yesterday around the UN declared "safe area" of Bihac in western Bosnia, where the heaviest clashes were reported since a Croatian offensive a month ago broke a three-year Serb siege of the pocket, reports Reuter.

UN sources in Sarajevo said the Bosnian government forces were responsible for initiating attacks out of the Bihac "safe area". They did not elaborate.

A UN spokesman said more than 300 explosions were recorded in the area.

Sarajevo radio said three people were killed and several wounded in Bosnian Serb artillery attacks on the towns of Bihac, Cazin and Bosanska Kurpa in the south, centre and the east respectively of the mainly Muslim pocket.

The Croatian news agency HINA reported 'fierce fighting' notably in the areas of Hrgar, southeast of Bihac, and Radic, to the east of the town.

Seven people were wounded in the Bosnian capital Sarajevo today when a single shell landed in a Western suburb, Bosnian police and hospital sources said.

The afternoon blast broke an uneasy calm as NATO and the United Nations pondered whether to resume air and artillery strikes after an ambiguous reply by Serb General Ratko Mladic to their demand that he pull back his guns from around the city.

Despite 13 hours of talks lasting until the early hours of today, General Mladic failed to give UN commander General Bernard Janvier assurances on the future conduct of the Serb forces.

Mladic, a proven master of brinkmanship in his dealing with a sometimes irresolute United Nations, appeared to deliver a typical yes, but answer, probing for a crack in UN-NATO resolve.

After flying 800 combat sorties and firing more than 1,200 artillery rounds since Wednesday to concentrate the minds of the Bosnian Serbs, the Western alliance ordered a temporary halt to give them pause for thought.

The West's new carrot-and-stick approach, spearheaded by the United States, bore first fruit yesterday.

Market capitalisation DSE highest in growth among 9 Asian bourses

Bangladesh stock market showed the highest growth in market capitalisation among the major emerging markets in the first half of the current year, reports UNB.

According to a comparative scenario of nine major emerging stock markets of Asia, Dhaka recorded the highest 20 per cent growth in market capitalisation between January and June this year.

Kuala Lumpur followed with a 15 per cent growth, Bangkok 14 per cent and Hong Kong 10 per cent.

Although Dhaka had the

KL to probe deaths at immigrant camp

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 2: Police have ordered an investigation into alleged torture, abuse, deaths, corruption and inhumane conditions at a camp housing Bangladeshis, Indians, Indonesians, Thais, Filipinos, Myanmarese and other illegal immigrants, reports AP.

Malaysia's highest ranking policeman, Inspector General of Police Abdul Rahim Noor, ordered the probe Friday. It will be headed by Criminal Investigation Department director Mohamed Said Awang, the New Straits Times daily reported today.

The team has been set up to determine the seriousness of the allegations," Police Public Relations Officer Ghazali Mohammed Amin told the daily.

Tenananita, a non-governmental organisation that fights for women's rights, released a detailed report in July on the situation at the camp in Semenyih, 40 kilometres south of Kuala Lumpur, making the allegations after interviewing more than 350 immigrants who came out of the camps over the past year.

Accompanying the report were signed letters by the immigrants making the allegations.

Police sources said the investigations were ordered after Police Field Force Commander Superintendent