

LTTE sets conditions to free hostages

COLOMBO, Sept 2: Women sea tigers who hijacked a Sri Lankan ferry with 144 people aboard have agreed to free most of the captives but set key conditions to release those they have taken hostage, a source close to the crisis said today.

"There are important, potentially difficult, conditions to be met for the release of some people they have taken prisoners," the source told Reuters.

He declined to spell out the conditions set by the Liberation Tigers of the Tamil Eelam (LTTE), saying: "It is too sensitive to talk about now."

It was also not clear how many people the Tigers had decided to keep as hostages.

But the source said most of the people seized aboard the Iris Mona by the Tigers' women's squad on Monday, would be handed over to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) unconditionally.

Military sources in the northern frontline town to Vavuniya said the army had stopped the movement of civilians from the south towards the northern rebel held areas until all people aboard the ferry were released.

The Tigers have blocked civilians from travelling from the north to the south.

"About 800 people are stranded already," a military source told Reuters.

Douglas Devananda, leader of the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), said the LTTE was holding some of his supporters captive.

While the hostages were being held aboard the ferry, other passengers were on their way to Jaffna, the LTTE's headquarters in the rebel-held north, the sources said.

ICRC officials, negotiating the release of the hostages, declined to identify them or say why they had been singled out.

Truck carrying policemen stoned: One hurt

By DMCH Correspondent

A police constable received serious head injuries when unidentified people pelted stones at the truck he was travelling at Moghbazar in the city last night.

Mid Nasiruddin, 27, of the Sixth Armed Battalion was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) in a critical condition.

According to sources, some unidentified people from the fourth floor of a building near Moghbazar T&T office pelted stones at the private truck in which a group of policemen were returning to their base at Uttara after hartal duties.

A stone hit Nasiruddin's head injuring him seriously.



A group of street urchins who play active role during any hartal brought out a procession in the city yesterday in support of the hartal. — Star photo

First day of 32-hr hartal

From Page 1

The day. Our Correspondent from Dinajpur reported that at least nine people, including a woman, were injured in clashes between two rival political parties near the Sunhary intersection in the town.

News agency reports said that at least 12 people were injured in a clash between pickets and anti-hartal shopkeepers in Rajshahi while nine were injured when anti-hartal activists attacked an Awami League procession at Pakundia Bazar in Kishoreganj district.

In Chandpur, at least 12 people, including two train drivers, were injured when opposition activists stoned a train and some government offices to enforce the hartal.

In the city, sporadic explosion of crackers marked the day. But there was no report of major casualty. The pickets burnt tyres on city streets at different areas.

A large contingent of police and BDR personnel were deployed at different city points. Chase and counter chase between police and pro-hartal activists took place at Airport Road near Shaheen College where a tempo was set ablaze early morning.

Police also fired two rounds of teargas shells to disperse the agitated pickets.

A clash between police and pickets took place at Mirpur Road near New Model Degree College. Some 10 people received injuries in the melee. Two youths — Asghar and Habib were in-

jured when a bomb went off at Bangabandhu Avenue.

Youths as well as teen-aged boys were seen playing cricket and soccer on wide city streets as these were deserted by all modes of vehicles, excepting a handful of rickshaws in certain areas.

The capital Dhaka remained cut off with other parts of the country as no inter-district buses plied from and to city terminals.

Railway sources said that all trains which operated before 6 am in the morning could reach Dhaka. Several trains which left Kamalapur after 6 in the morning were intercepted by pickets at different places. Communication was also hampered as the pickets blockaded roads and rail tracks at several places around the country.

The rail communication was hampered by pickets at Laksham, Maynamati in Comilla, Feni, Akhaura, Kulara, Manglabazar, Mymensingh, Hasanpur, Joydevpur and Dhala stations by putting barricades. At Laksham, the signal system was damaged by a group of protesters in the morning, agencies reported.

During hartal hours, only a few launches left Sadarghat terminals with less passengers, while all international and domestic flights of Biman operated on schedule except one domestic flight to Saidpur.

The attendance in government offices was thin, while the private business organisations and educational institutions remained closed.

In some cases, government employees stayed in their offices Friday night.

The pickets misbehaved with journalists on duty at Shyamoli area at around 10 am. And an autorickshaw (Dhaka-metro-tha-03-3028), carrying the newsmen of The Daily Star was damaged by the pickets near Asadgate at about 2 pm, while another autorickshaw of the Daily Ittefaq was damaged at Sayedabad at 7 in the morning.

During hartal hours, a series of processions were brought out almost all parts of the city. People, particularly office-goers, were seen walking through the empty streets.

At about 8 am, a procession of Awami League was brought out from Bangabandhu Avenue under the leadership of Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Prof Faziul Haq and Pankaj Devnath. BCL brought out a procession at Shabbagh area at about 9 am.

Awami League held a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club at about 11 am. Jatiya Party also held a rally in front of Press Club at the same time, while Jamaat-e-Islami held a rally at the north gate of Baitul Mukarram mosque.

AL leaders Tofael Ahmed, Matia Chowdhury and Shahjahan Khan led a procession in Farmgate area at about 9 am. Besides, processions were also brought out at Sayedabad, Motijheel, Maghbazar, Farmgate, Mahakhali, Shyamoli, Asadgate and Mirpur.

Saddam orders seizure of Uday's property?

DUBAI, Sept 2: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has ordered the seizure of property belonging to his oldest son, Uday, amid growing criticisms against him, the Iraqi opposition in exile said today.

Among the goods seized are a transport company and a food processing factory where employees were told not to turn up for work any more, the Iraqi National Congress (INC) said in a statement sent to AFP in Dubai.

The INC added that guards had been deployed around the companies' buildings.

An independent confirmation of the report was not available.

A committee headed by Saddam's second son Qusay has been set up to carry out the confiscation of Uday's property, the statement said.

AL, JP, Jamaat

From Page 1

terday, AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman said the people had once again demonstrated their no-confidence in the present government by observing the hartal spontaneously.

He also said the people have become frustrated as the Prime Minister did not give any direction to end the political impasse in her speech at the Gulistan square rally Friday.

AL presidium member Amir Hossain Amu said the Prime Minister was now confusing the people because she had lost their support. He said that their movement would continue until the government accepted the demand for elections under a caretaker government.

Party Organising Secretary Mohammad Nasim said there would not be any talks with the government and the Opposition would decide their course. He condemned police brutalities in Dinajpur.

Leaders of the JP at a separate rally in front of the Press Club yesterday said the Opposition would not allow holding of elections without a caretaker administration. They also warned that the Opposition would not leave the streets until their demand was realised.

The JP rally was addressed by, among others, Abdus Salam, Shah Mohammad Abu Zafar, Mostafa Zaman, Mainul Islam and Alamgir Sikder.

Bombs hurled at Redwan's house

By Staff Correspondent

At least three bombs were hurled at the Uttara residence of the president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters' Association (BGMEA) Redwan Ahmed, MP, yesterday at about 1:30 PM, family and police sources said.

None was, however, injured in the bomb attack. But window panes and some furniture of the house at Road No 6, Sector 4, Uttara were reportedly damaged. Redwan, a ruling party MP, is now in Singapore.

Sources said, three youths came to the spot riding a motor bike and left the area immediately after throwing three bombs. "Pro-hartal elements might be involved in the attack," said a family member.

A case was filed with Uttara thana in this connection. None was held till filing of this report at 11:00 pm.

BSS adds: BNP Secretary General and Minister for LGRD Abdus Salam Talukder yesterday condemned the hurling of bombs at the residence of Redwan Ahmed MP.

In a statement Talukder demanded arrest of the persons responsible for such terrorist activities.

Govt increases OMS allocation

Government has decided to increase the quantity of rice sold through open market sale (OMS) system from tomorrow to keep the price of foodgrains stable, an official handout said yesterday, reports UNB.

It said two tons of rice instead of one ton will now be allocated for the thanas having four unions, four tons for the thanas with five to 10 unions, five tons instead of two tons for thanas having 11 or more unions and six tons instead of two and a half tons for sadar thanas.

The OMS system was introduced in 246 flood-affected thanas on August 1 and all over the country on August 16.

Under the system, per head maximum three kilograms of rice was sold at the rate of Tk 11 per kg in Dhaka and Chittagong metropolitan areas and at Tk 10.50 in other places of the country.

The Midnight File

Iraq seeks support from China France, Russia to lift UN ban

BAGHDAD, Sept 2: Iraq called upon China, France and Russia on Saturday to keep up their conditional support within the UN Security Council for a lifting of the five-year-old sanctions. The official daily Al-Jumhuriya said the three countries "must prove they are keeping their pledges to work for an end to the sanctions, as they have officially committed themselves," reports AFP.

NGO Forum's deadline

From Page 1

The organisers said the Chinese had refused to admit there was excessive security on the site in the suburban town of Huairou, an hour north of Beijing.

Harassment of radical feminist groups and surveillance of human-rights activists, limits on movement and lack of facilities are just some problems marring a grassroots forum whose aim is to focus on the battle for equality for women and their rights.

Organisers said privately that security officials had demanded to search the rooms of participants in the middle of the night and had thrown some out of their hotels.

Another report says, China delayed publication of a UN-endorsed newspaper that planned to cover the Women's Forum and was to carry a column by US first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, publishers said today.

The Earth Times is only one of several newspapers linked to the NGO Forum on women and the United

NAM states adopt Beijing message

BEIJING, Sept 2: The two-day ministerial meeting of the non-aligned countries ended here today adopting unanimously a "Beijing message" which wanted the international community to cooperate in preventing and combating terrorism, reports PTI.

The non-aligned meeting was a pre-women conference caucus to arrive at a common stand by non-aligned countries on some of the pressing women issues during the women's conference beginning on September 4.

The Beijing message would serve as guideline in which India has played a pivotal role.

The message said terrorism is violation of human rights and had negative impact on women and girls as enunciated in the Vienna declaration and programme of action.

Weatherill

From Page 1

caretaker government can be formed. The opposition is demanding three months. There should be a compromise between the two demands. And I think that could be agreed.

"Surely time has come for all parties to get together to come to a compromise so that a neutral government carrying on essential business and non-controversial business can operate for, let's say, 60 days."

In reply to a question, he said it would be highly dangerous if the Opposition does not take part in the elections allowing the government party to be re-elected by their supporters.

"Because there will be no opposition to it, no criticism in it," Weatherill said, adding in UK in such situation the government will welcome it as the Opposition has failed to do its duty. "We will be electing potential dictatorship which will be highly, highly dangerous."

The 75-year-old Weatherill said if politicians failed to resolve the crisis, they should think of the consequences. He, however, hoped that Bangladesh would not face any unhappy situation over the election that might lead to riot, blood-letting on the street and a disastrous situation.

"Freedom, you know, is a very fragile flower... Bear in mind, please, that it is far easier to lose our freedoms than it is to regain them."

Hasina

From Page 1

Commissioner Motul Huq Manju, Chhatra League leader Sajjad Hossain, Alamgir Hasan and Mostafizur Rahman were among the workers arrested in the city.

A number of AL workers were injured by the attack of BNP activists at different places of the country, including at least 50 in Narayanganj and nine people at Haripur in Thakurgaon, she said.

The terrorists also attacked the hartal processions in Chittagong, Bogra, Naogaon and other places leaving many injured, Hasina said.

Nations Fourth World Conference on Women next week.

"They've said they will give us a decision tonight. It looks good," Ashali Varma, associate publisher, said in an interview. "I hope for all our sakes it will be published."

AP from Honolulu adds: Hillary Clinton, who leaves tomorrow for the UN conference, will speak out on human rights but will not directly challenge China about its record of abuses, according to White House officials.

The wife of President Clinton also will not meet with any of China's leaders, officials said Saturday.

The first lady, in Hawaii with her husband for ceremonies marking the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, is slated to arrive in China early Tuesday after crossing the international date line and making a refueling stop in Guam. Later that day, she is scheduled to speak at the UN Conference.

Her plan to participate has come under dogged criticism, led by Republicans who say the first lady should boycott the conference in protest of China's poor human rights record. She announced she would attend after China released Chinese-American human rights activist Harry Wu after convicting him on espionage charges.

24 die in Iranian bus collision

TEHRAN, Sept 2: Twenty-four people were killed and 13 seriously injured as three buses collided with a tanker truck in eastern Iran, the second deadly accident on the same road in three days, newspapers reported today, says AFP.

DSE growth

From Page 1

credit of growing fastest, its volume of market capitalisation at US dollars 1.25 billion at the end of June is the smallest among the nine markets. Even Karachi, placed eighth, had a market capitalisation of US dollars 10 billion.

Bombay, Karachi, Seoul, Manila and Singapore had negative growth, losing between 17 per cent and 3 per cent during the period.

Karachi experienced the worst slump while Bombay followed with 9 per cent.

With US dollars 220 billion at the end of June this year, Kuala Lumpur has the highest market capitalisation, followed by Hong Kong (185 billion), Seoul (175 billion), Singapore (169 billion), Bangkok (150 billion), Bombay (92 billion), Manila (55 billion), Karachi (10 billion) and Dhaka (1.25 billion).

PM leaves

From Page 1

gathering include equality, violation of human rights, gender discrimination and woman bashing.

The Beijing conference is expected to be attended by 20,000 delegates from 180 countries, international agencies, regional organisations and NGOs.

Begum Zia, attending the conference at the invitation of host China, is likely to address the opening session, highlighting socio-economic and political problems facing women across the world, particularly her governments move to uphold the dignity of women.

PM's speech is expected to be featured by measures ensuring more participation of women in business and economic activities, administration, politics and social welfare, enhancement of female education and their involvement in overall nation-building works.

The Bangladesh Prime Minister will also be a speaker in the panel of eminent personages in the opening session of the UNICEF-organised programme on "Education: Priority Action for Girls" on Wednesday.

On the sidelines of the conference, Begum Zia will have meetings with Chinese President Xian Zemin and Prime Minister Li Peng which will cover bilateral matters as well as important developments in regional and international scenario.

During her four-day stay in Beijing, she will also meet a few dignitaries, attending the conference, before returning home on September 6.

Body to probe irregularities

From Page 1

Corporation under an agreement with BSL got the responsibility for management of the hotel for 20 years with effect from 1984.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism scrutinised the allegations levelled against the management of Hotel Sheraton whereby it appeared that the hotel used to make profit during 1973 to 1983 under the management of the Inter-Continental chain, the handout noted.

But, since the management of the hotel went to Sheraton, it has started making huge losses every year which has become a matter of concern for the Taka 200 crore hotel property of the government.

While making further examinations, it appeared that the unequal agreement giving responsibility to Sheraton to manage the hotel was responsible for incurring such huge losses. The government feels that the agreement requires to be changed, it added.

The handout said, if the government is not properly informed of the receipts and expenditures accounts of the hotel, there remains apprehensions that the hotel will incur further losses.

Considering these, the government has set up a two-member enquiry committee. Incidents of financial irregularities, corruptions etc will be identified by this committee, it pointed out.

The handout said, the government, considering the national interest, has taken this step to make these two hotels profitable and dynamic.

The handout said vested interest apprehending prob-

lem for them has been trying to undo the objective of the enquiry committee and misinterpret the agreement with the Sheraton and Sonargang hotels.

The handout said, the owning companies, HIL and BSL, or for that matter the government has the right to enquiry into the financial position of the hotels to ascertain how they are being managed and why they are incurring losses.

Dhaka-Yangon border trade from Sept 5

COXS BAZAR, Sept 2: The much awaited Myanmar-Bangladesh border trade through Teknaf border here will start from September 5, according to official sources yesterday, reports BSS.

Commerce minister of Bangladesh and Myanmar are expected to inaugurate Bangladesh-Myanmar border trade at Teknaf and Maungdu the same day.

A 20-member Myanmar delegation headed by Myanmar Commerce Minister Lt Gen Tun Key would attend inaugural function at Teknaf while Bangladesh would send a similar delegation to Maungdu headed by Commerce Minister Shamsul Islam to attend the ceremony there.

Bihac

From Page 1

Special US envoy Richard Holbrooke, negotiating with the Bosnian Serbs through Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, arranged the first face-to-face peace talks between the Bosnian, Croatian and Yugoslavian foreign ministers, scheduled to take place in Geneva later next week.

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KL to probe deaths

From Page 1

Abdul Malek Jano lodged a police report Friday against Tenaganita claiming the group had defamed him and his men who were running the camp.

Deputy Home Affairs Minister Megat Junid Megat Ayub said there were 46 deaths at Semenyih and another camp since they were established in 1993, but the deaths were due to illnesses, many contacted when the immigrants trekked through mountains and jungles to reach Malaysia.

There are nine camps in all housing several thousand illegal immigrants.

Leader of the opposition in parliament Lim Kit Siang said there should not have been so many deaths due to illness because the governments should have provided proper medical care from the more than 300 million ringgit (120 million dollars) the government was collecting annually as levies from foreign workers.

Some foreign missions claimed they had been kept in the dark about the deaths and alleged treatment, and the Indian High Commission said it has asked the Foreign

Ministry to give details of any deaths and abuse.

At least five of those who died were Indian.

The Bangladesh government has ordered its mission here to investigate about 25 who died, were reported to be Bangladeshis.

Lim said a thorough investigation was necessary for Malaysia to have continued good relations with these nations.

Hostages in Kashmir safe

SRINAGAR, Sept 2: The four Western tourists being held hostage by Kashmiri rebels for nearly two months were safe, said a government spokesman today, quoting Indian negotiators who are trying to win their freedom, reports AP.

For the first time since the negotiations began mid-July, Indian officials spoke twice in the same day to Al-Faran guerillas who are holding an American, two Britons and one German captive. So far, rebels have refused to talk to negotiators more than once in one day.

The kidnapers want India to free 15 jailed guerillas. India has refused to accept the demand.

China asks PLA to crush Tibetan movement

BEIJING, Sept 2: The Chinese Communist Party, in an exhortation coinciding with a key political date, has urged People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops stationed in Tibet to crush the Tibetan independence movement, reports AFP.

"Officers and troops have the historic task of defending, development and stabilising Tibet," Deputy Premier Wu Bangguo said in an address Friday.

Dhaka calls for expansion of Security Council

Bangladesh has called for a realistic expansion of the Security Council to include Third World countries like itself and to make the activities of the United Nations and its budget more participatory and transparent, as among measures, to reinforce and democratise the structures for international cooperation, reports BSS.

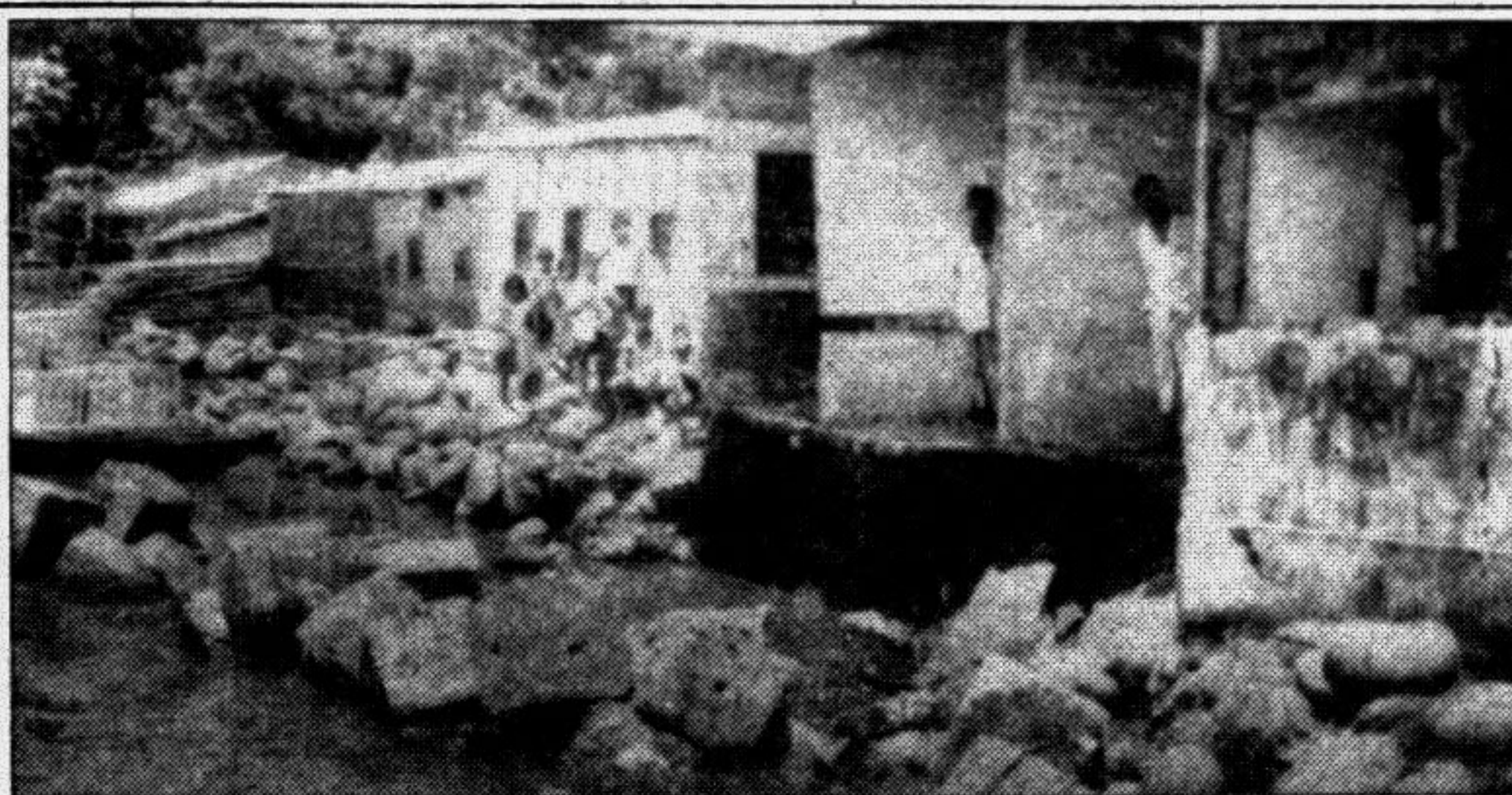
Dr A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury, the Deputy Leader of the House, moved the proposals at the convocation of the "Special session on the inter-parliamentary council on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the creation of the United Nations" at the UN headquarters in New York on Thursday.

Speaking at the convocation Dr Chowdhury made a six-point proposal to reinforce and democratise the UN.

The Security Council, he proposed, must be expanded realistically.

Countries committed to the security of the world specially third world countries, including countries like Bangladesh, contributing practically in security and peace-keeping, he proposed, should be represented in the Security Council.

Dr Badruddoza observed that despite having a United



Four shops at the fish market at Natun Bazar, Chandpur, were devoured by the Meghna Thursday night. — Star photo by Shirin Akhter