

9 killed, 98 injured in road accidents

At least 9 people were killed and about one hundred injured in five road accidents in Savar, Pabna, Chittagong and Sylhet yesterday, report agencies.

At least six people were killed and 60 others injured in three accidents on the Dhaka-Aricha highway in Savar and Dhamrai thanas, police said.

Witnesses said four people were killed and 45 others injured when a BRTC coach collided head-on with a truck, also owned by the state-run transport corporation, near Dhamrai bus station at about 10 am.

Afazzuddin, 40, Arif, 8, and two unidentified men died on the spot as the Aricha-bound bus skidded off the road and plunged into a 30-foot-deep ditch after the collision.

In another mishap, a young man was killed and 15 people were injured when a Dhaka-bound minibus from Aricha fell into a roadside ditch near Joypura bus-stop in Dhamrai thana at 10:30 am.

The dead was identified as Biplob, 24.

Truck driver Fazar Ali, 40, died on the spot when two trucks collided head-on at Fulbaria bus stand in Savar thana at about noon.

Among those injured in the three accidents, 17 were admitted to different hospitals and clinics in Savar, Dhamrai and in Dhaka.

Two persons were killed and seven others injured when a passenger bus and a speeding truck collided head-on at Masjid under Sita-kunda thana on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway.

The accident occurred when a Dhaka-bound bus reached Masjid near Sultana Jute Mills, suddenly collided with the truck coming from opposite direction, police said.

Two persons died on the spot and seven passengers received injuries. The dead could not be identified.

Six people including a government officer were wounded in a road-mishap at Atakula under Sadar thana in Pabna, police and hospital sources said.

The victims were identified as Chairman of Bangladesh Sericulture Board Mohammad Shaiful Islam, his wife, daughter Soma and son Shishir. The driver of the jeep, carrying them was also wounded.

All the wounded were admitted to the Pabna Sadar Hospital.

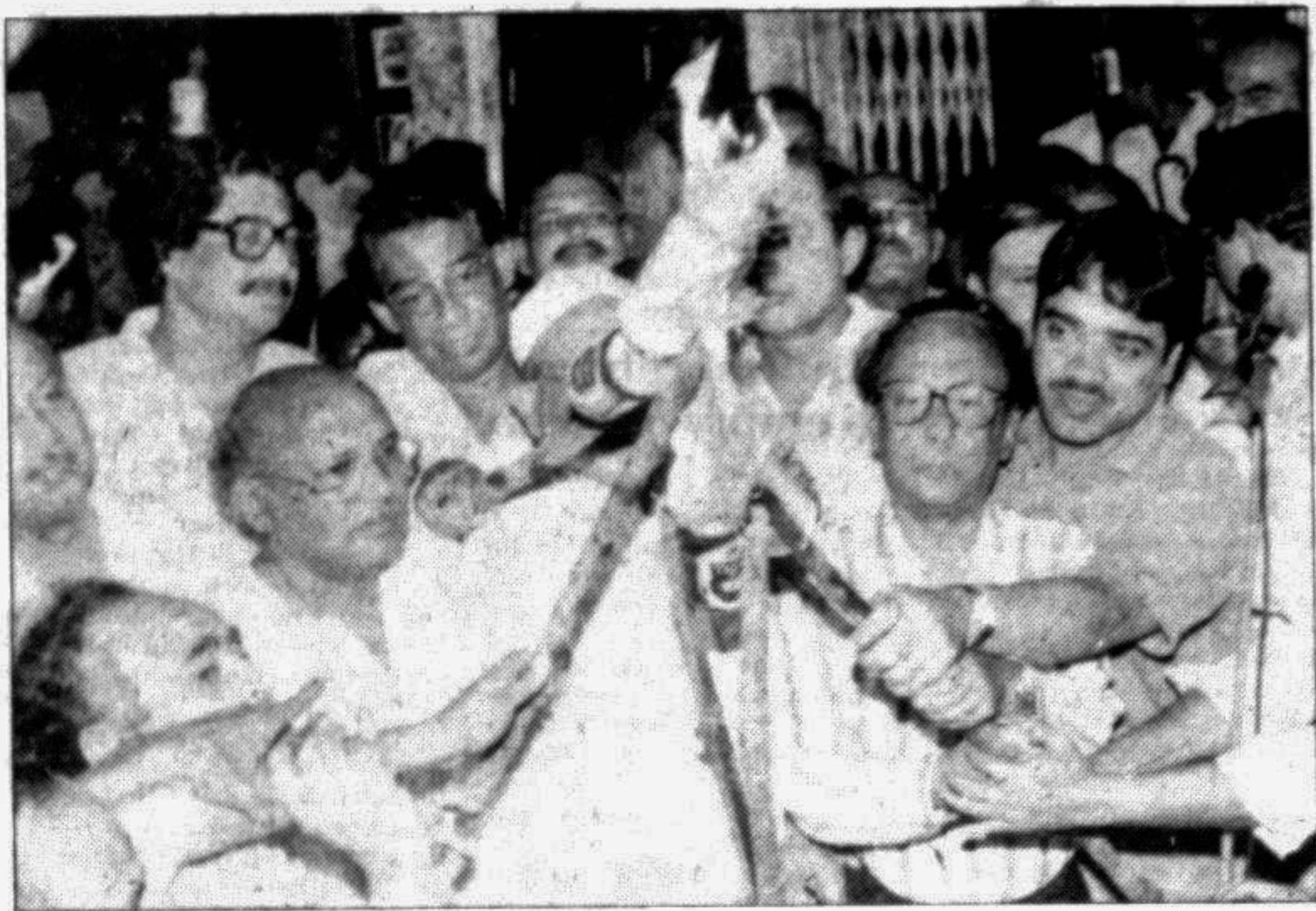
The mishap occurred when the Dhaka-bound jeep collided head-on with a truck on the Pabna-Nagarbari Highway at 5 pm. They were coming from Rajshahi.

Our Staff Correspondent in Sylhet adds: A minor girl died on the spot and 25 others were injured in a road accident on the Sylhet-Jakiganj road yesterday afternoon.

A passenger coach on its way to Jakiganj from Sylhet over turned and skidded into the roadside ditch at Ramda Kargam at about 3 pm.

The injured were admitted to the Golapganj Thana Health Complex.

The driver managed to escape. Police seized the vehicle (Sylhet Ba-2641).



Awami League leaders lighting torches before the start of a procession in the city yesterday to drum up support for the dawn-to-dusk hartal in the capital today. — Star photo

AL warns of tougher programmes

Awami League leaders yesterday warned, the current 'ouster government' agitation would be intensified by throwing tougher programmes one after another, reports UNB.

The street agitation will be carried on until the removal of this 'killer and autocratic' government, until the demand of the people is realised, they said at a protest rally at Bangabandhu Avenue in the afternoon.

The City Awami League organised the rally to drum up a dawn-to-dusk hartal in the capital today to protest sitting of opposition-deserted parliament and the killing of a rickshawpuller at Mirpur on September 3.

"This illegal government has no right to summon this illegal parliament, ... which virtually has no existence," said AL leader Abdus Samad Azad, who was Deputy Leader of the Opposition in this Parliament before their en masse resignation.

The Awami League has called the hartal in protest against the autocratic activities of the government, and not to allow the governing party MPs to attend Parliament, he said. Parliament is going into autumn session today.

This government was given maximum time, but it didn't pay heed to the demand of the people, said the AL leader, adding that now this government will be removed through all-out agitation.

AL general secretary Zillur Rahman later told newsmen that Raphael was briefed about the rationale behind the party's demand for holding elections under a non-party caretaker government.

AL general secretary Zillur Rahman said this government had chosen the way of torture and repression to foil the Opposition agitation. But the consequence of this will not be good for the ruling party, he added.

Raphel, Hasina

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dence in both the government and the Election Commission since the Magura polls. "She was also informed about electoral malpractices," he added.

Another AL leader present at the talks said: "Raphel listened to whatever we said with a lot of interest. She was indeed a very good listener."

Asked if she had offered any suggestions, the AL leader said, "She (Raphel) did not offer any views of her own. Neither we asked, nor did she offer to play any role as a mediator in the current political crisis."

Emerging from the meeting Raphael told newsmen: "We had a very good discussion." She refused to comment further.

AL leader Sheikh Hasina when asked if she was optimistic about a solution to the persisting political impasse replied, "Everybody is optimistic."

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Hartal today

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vehicles carrying newsmen and newspapers will, however, remain outside the purview of the hartal programme.

Abdur Rahim Badshah, a rickshawpuller was killed in a clash at Mirpur in the city at the fag end of 32-hour hartal. Awami League later claimed that Badshah was a worker of Sramik League, its labour front.

Meanwhile, sources said yesterday that opposition political parties will announce fresh identical programmes for agitation from separate venues during or after the hartal.

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina will announce her party's next programme at a press conference at 7 pm today at the Jatiya Press Club.

Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami will also announce fresh programmes from separate rallies to be held at the south and north gates respectively of the Baitul Mukarram mosque.

Opposition

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to vote and food as well as failed to give security to public life and property.

Hasina alleged that armed terrorists backed by the party in power have been killing people indiscriminately. Price-hike of essential commodities has further increased the misery of the commonman.

She accused the government of violating the Constitution time and again crippling democracy and democratic institutions.

Geodetic Control Network setup

Survey of Bangladesh, the national mapping agency, has established a Geodetic Control Network in the country adding new dimension to its surveying and mapping activities, reports UNB.

This was disclosed yesterday at a day-long seminar where the results of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)-assisted project under which the network was established were presented.

The establishment of a geodetic control network is a prerequisite for accurate topographical maps, implementation of various civil engineering projects, national land development and conservation plans.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman inaugurated the seminar on "Establishment of Geodetic Datum for Bangladesh" at a local hotel, saying that implementation of the project is "a big step forward" for the Survey of Bangladesh.

He said accurate and up-to-date topographical maps are a prerequisite for planning and implementing various national development plans as well as projects for improving social infrastructures.

The project, "Strengthening the Capability of Survey of Bangladesh in Geodesy", was initiated in 1992 and completed in June this year, having a horizontal coordinate datum point established at Gulshan in the capital.

Defence Secretary MA Hakim, Japanese Charge d'Affaires Shuhei Takahashi, Surveyor General Col Shahidul Islam Mondal and JICA Resident Representative Morimasa Kanamaru also addressed the inaugural session.

BNPPP

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cal impasse and the ruling BNP is willing to talk to the opposition parties on how the affairs of the government can be run if the Prime Minister and her cabinet resign 30 days before the forthcoming general polls take place," said Khandakar Delwar, reflecting the opinions of majority of the party lawmakers.

The meeting, he added, also felt that the ruling party should reach a consensus with the major opposition parties on constitutional measures to be taken for holding a free and fair polls following the proposed resignation of the government of Begum Khaleda Zia.

The BNP lawmakers were unhappy with the opposition's rejection of the PM's dialogue offer noting that no solution was possible in the streets. "If they don't prefer a negotiated settlement, then what do they really want?" the Chief Whip asked.

Asked if the meeting discussed the Dinajpur killings, Khandakar Delwar said some of the MPs, while speaking on the matter, viewed that the incidents might have occurred due to excess by a section of the police.

The meeting sources, however, said Major (ret'd) Akhteruzzaman and several other MPs blamed the Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury for the unwanted situation at Dinajpur following the death of a minor girl in police custody.

Chairing the meeting, sources said, Prof A Q M Badruddoza Choudhury urged the party leaders to work for strengthening the party, sink differences among themselves and identify the party's organisational weaknesses ahead of the next general polls.

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Voter registration

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had to mention the place where they desired to cast their vote.

The writ petition raised the question that what would happen to those voters who registered between May 25 and May 28.

The Court observed that the said EC press release did not have retrospective effect.

The Court, however, rejected another writ petition challenging the qualifying date and the date of registration on the grounds that the petitioner is not an aggrieved person, who has no locus standi to file the petition.

According to the EC rule the people who attained 18 years of age on or before January 1 last would be qualified to be registered as a voter, although the registration began on May 25, the petitioner noted.

Barrister Moudud Ahmed along with Advocate Azizul Huq moved the first petition, and Advocate A B M Nurul Islam moved the last one.

Additional Attorney General Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan, Abdul Wadud Khanokar and Dr Ahmed Hossain appeared for the State and the EC.

The Midnight File

145 civilians killed in Leone

FREETOWN, Sept 5: Some 145 civilians have been killed in an attack by rebels against two diamond mining towns in eastern Sierra Leone, military officials said here today. They said 98 people were killed in Njalama, 220 kms east of Freetown, and another 47 in neighbouring Njala, most of them burnt to death as the revolutionary united front rebels attacked the towns last week, reports AFP.

UK co proposes to set up 110 mw power plant

By Sharier Khan

A British company, Midland Power International, is likely to sign within a week a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the government to set up a 110 megawatt (MW) power plant, official sources said yesterday.

Since April last, the Energy Ministry has signed nine MOUs with foreign private power developers from the USA, Canada, Singapore and other countries to generate over 2000 MW, with an investment outlay of around 2.50 billion US dollars.

Under a proposal being discussed, Midland International will set up a natural gas-fired combined cycle power plant on build-own-operate (BOO) basis, possibly utilising the Semutang gas field in Chittagong Hill Tracts, within 15 months of signing the final accord, Petrobangla sources said.

A two member delegation of the company is likely to arrive in the capital within a couple of days to sign the MOU.

According to stipulations included in the MOUs already signed, the foreign companies and concerned government agencies like the

Political leaders exchange views with Raphel

By Staff Correspondent

Leading political leaders had an opportunity to exchange views with the visiting US Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphel at a dinner hosted by the Charge d'Affaires of the US Embassy yesterday evening.

Those who attended the dinner from the Awami League were Abdus Samad Azad, Totalet Ahmed, Begum Sajeda Chowdhury and S A M S Kibria. Anwar Hussain Manju and Moudud Ahmed from Jatiya Party were present while Matiuur Rahman Nizami of Jamaat-e-Islami was the only other opposition leader attending, according to sources.

Barrister Ishfaq Ahmed, an eminent lawyer who recently gave a formula to solve the political impasse was the only lawyer-politician who attended the dinner.

From the ruling BNP only Finance Minister Saifur Rahman, Deputy Leader of the House Badruddoza Chowdhury and party stalwart Tanvir Ahmed Siddique were present.

Latifur Rahman, a former president of the Metropolitan Chamber also attended the dinner.

Meets Army Chief

Visiting US Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphel yesterday called on Chief of Army Staff Lt. General A S M Nasim at the Army Headquarters. According to sources she had an hour long meeting with the Chief to the Army Staff.

Punjab

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and 15 other PPP members of the provincial cabinet were unhappy with the Watto-led administration.

He said the resignations had been sent to the provincial governor and would become valid after the governor accepted them.

Border trade

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Shahjahan Chowdhury, MP, and Amir Khashru Mahmud Chowdhury, MP, and Syed Mahmudul Huq, businessman and owner of the Bangladesh Myanmar Joint-Venture Fisheries firm addressed the function.

Myanmar Minister for Livestock and Fisheries Brig-Gen Maung Maung was also present.

Bangladesh ambassador to Myanmar Chowdhury Khaliquzzaman and ambassador of the union of Myanmar in Dhaka Hla Myint Oo, senior civil and military officials of Chittagong division, director general of DDR, officials of Customs, police, Sonali Bank and a large number of members of the local chamber of commerce and industry were also present on the occasion.

Earlier a similar function was held at Maungdow on Myanmar side to mark the opening of the border trade where Bangladesh delegation was led by Minister for Fisheries and Livestock Abdullah Al Noman.

The major Bangladesh items to be exchanged under the border trade will include pharmaceutical products, jute goods, cosmetics, CI sheets, construction materials and the products to be imported from Myanmar will be items like rice, pulses, beans, timber, bamboos, livestock, fish, shrimps and vegetables.

The Myanmar minister suggested periodic review for further improvement of the border trade. Flexibility should be kept in mind for the success of the newly introduced border trade, he added.

Emeka

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Begum Zia's Beijing Hotel suite here, the Commonwealth Secretary General mentioned the decisions taken at the Copenhagen Conference on development and the possible decisions of the on-going 4th World Conference on Women.

Earlier, UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her Beijing Hotel suite.

JS session

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to start at 5 in the afternoon. BNP secretary general Abdus Salam Talukdar, in yesterday's emergency meeting of the party's parliamentary party, urged the MPs to attend the session on time.

Raphel: Child labour

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"Implementation (of the MOU) is the key," she emphasised.

The acting president of BGMEA, S M Fazlul Haque, urged for increased garment import quota from the US, in consideration of the association's bold step to eliminate child labour from the garment sector.

Mostafa Golam Qudus, Chairman of the BGMEA Standing Committee on Child Labour, informed the US official of the progress in implementation of the MOU at the meeting held in the BGMEA conference room.

BGMEA signed the MOU along with International Labour Organisation (ILO) and UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) on July 4 to provide the underage workers with stipend-education after their termination from the industry.

While informing that no BGMEA factories are recruiting fresh child workers, Qudus said a joint survey was now being conducted to ascertain the exact number of underage children working in the country's some 2200 garment units.

Completion of the survey

will eventually lead to full elimination of child workers from Bangladesh's garment industry, he said.

Raphel appreciated the "degree of commitment" the BGMEA and other parties have taken for the rehabilitation of the child workers of the country's garment sector.

"The BGMEA would like to claim that with the signing of the MOU it has taken a most bold, even revolutionary, step for the welfare of the underaged workers," said Qudus.

Referring to the stipend and schooling for the child labourers, he sought "Generous" support of the US government to accomplish "the expensive project."

Against the backdrop of the steps taken by the BGMEA, Qudus appealed to the Clinton Administration "to kindly enhance quota for garment imports from Bangladesh."

Deputy Chief of the US Embassy Nancy J Powell and other embassy officials accompanied Raphel during the meeting. S M Fazlul Haq, M A Taher, K M Zaman and Abdus Salam Murshed were present on the BGMEA side.

PM meets Jiang, Li

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Referring to the trade gap between Dhaka and Beijing, the Bangladesh Prime Minister requested the Chinese President to buy more goods from Bangladesh to remove trade imbalance.

In reply, the Chinese President said he was informed about the trade imbalance and assured the Bangladesh leader of resolving the issue.

Begum Zia thanked the President for the warm hospitality given to her and to the members of her entourage.

The Bangladesh Prime Minister also paid a courtesy call on Chinese Premier Li Peng at his office this morning.

Welcoming Begum Zia, the Chinese Premier said such a visit would greatly help in enhancing bilateral ties between the two countries.

The two prime ministers, during the meeting, discussed various bilateral, regional and global issues, and agreed to cooperate with each other in their development endeavours.

Hailing the Chinese march towards rapid development, Begum Zia sought continued cooperation from China in Bangladesh's development efforts.

Changes are occurring everyday both in Bangladesh and in China, she said, stressing the need for identifying new areas of cooperation.

Begum Zia thanked the Chinese government for its assistance in extracting coal from Barapukuria and setting up a power plant in Raozan.

Li Peng said there existed a traditional friendship between the peoples of China and Bangladesh.

Begum Zia extended invited to the Chinese Premier to visit Bangladesh, which he accepted and expressed the hope to visit Bangladesh at the earliest opportunity.

Begum Zia will address the opening session of the Unicef programme on education — 'Priority Actions for Girls' — at International Convention Centre tomorrow morning.

She attended tonight a reception, hosted by Bangladesh ambassador in China, Mostafizur Rahman.

The Prime Minister will leave the historic city, Beijing, for home tomorrow.

Meanwhile, the State Minister for Women Affairs, Sarwari Rahman, who is leading a 32-member official delegation, was elected vice-president of the Fourth World Conference on Women today.

Bangladesh economist and Grameen Bank managing director Dr Muhammad Yunus will speak tomorrow at a panel discussion titled "Banking on the Poor: Women's economic empowerment" which will be chaired by US First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton.



US First Lady Hillary Clinton (L) is greeted by an unidentified Chinese woman official upon her arrival yesterday at the old Beijing airport to attend the Fourth World Conference on Women. — AFP/UNB photo

'Time to break the silence'

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jected to violence in their own homes.

"Tragically, women are most often the ones whose human rights are violated," Mrs Clinton said. "I believe that, on the eve of a new millennium, it is time to break the silence."

"If there is one message that echoes forth from this conference," Mrs Clinton said, "let it be that human rights are women's rights. And women's rights are human rights, once and for all."

A day after an opening marked by calls for unity in the struggle for gender equality, the nearly 5,000 official delegates were splitting into working groups on the conference's proposed platform.

The document, to be debated over the next 10 days, calls for steps to alleviate women's poverty and improve health care, education and job opportunities for women.

In the opening salvo of what is expected to be a major battle, Vatican delegation head Mary Ann Glendon said promoting women's aspira-

tions should not come at the expense of "undermining their roles within the family."

Pakistan's Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, too, said she hoped to see more in the document about the traditional family.

"The more close-knit the family is, the more close-knit society itself will be," she said in an interview with The Associated Press.

From others, however, came criticism that the platform is too conservative. Women representing African-American, Asian, American-Indian and Latino women told the US delegation they do not think the platform's language is strong enough on fighting racism and combating poverty.

At the parallel forum in Hualirou, lesbian activists staged a demonstration in favour of gay rights, while conservative Muslim women marched against homosexuality.

Some 1,000 women from 15 countries today staged one of the largest demonstrations yet held here, demanding an end to racism, sexism and fundamentalism.