

Kashmiri militants asked to kill 5 ex-leaders

SRINAGAR, India, Feb 14: A Kashmiri guerrilla group today issued 'shoot-at-sight' orders to kill five former rebel leaders who want to start peace talks with India, reports Reuters.

All militants have been asked to shoot at sight Babar Aker, Bilal Lodhi, Imran Rahi, Ghulam Mohideen Lone and Ahsan Dar, the Muslim Janbaz Force (MJF) said in a statement.

Four of the targeted men, jailed by Indian authorities and later released, said last week they were ready to hold direct talks with New Delhi, and without Pakistan's participation, to end the separatist crisis in the state.

The fifth, the jailed Chief Commander of Muslim Mujahideen, Ahsan Dar, has given his support to the others.

Pakistan claims sovereignty over Kashmir, which forms part of the only Muslim-majority province in predominantly Hindu India. Islamabad also denies Indian charges it has armed the

Muslim rebels in a six-year revolt that has killed some 20,000 people in Kashmir. This (the move for talks) is a conspiracy hatched by India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) against the freedom movement of Kashmiris with the four former militant leaders, MJF said, referring to New Delhi's intelligence agency, RAW.

MJF hailed statements against the breakaway leaders from some other guerrilla groups.

The MJF, which says Islamic Pakistan has an important role to play in resolving the Kashmir issue, called for a general strike on Saturday in protest against the offer for talks.

Another group, Hizbollah, to which Imran Rahi belongs, earlier this week asked the breakaway leaders to present themselves immediately or face 'direct action.'

The four former militants, who had been in the ranks of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, Muslim Janbaz Force, Muslim Mujahideen and Al-Barq

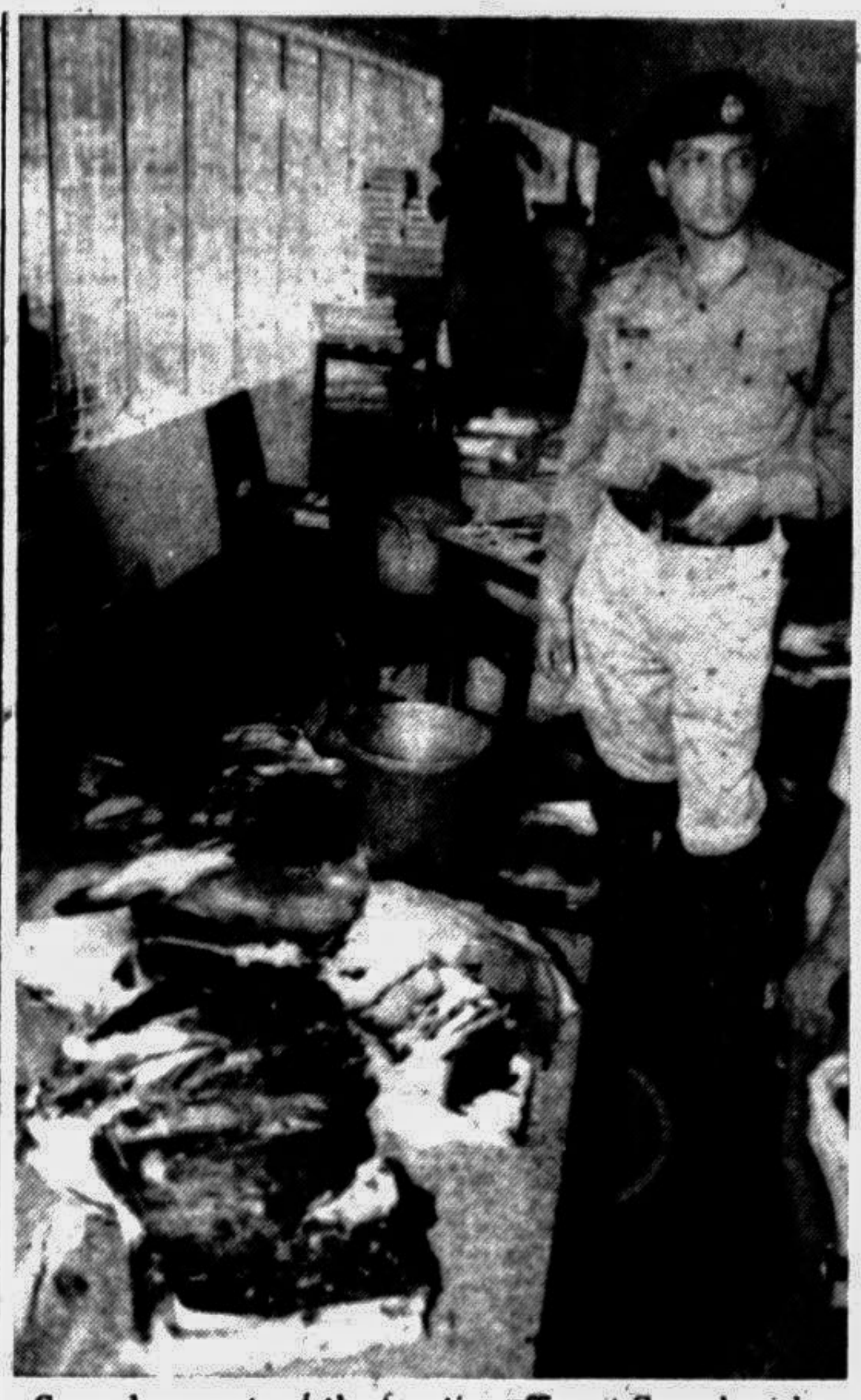
guerrilla groups, said they were ready to talk without Pakistan, at least initially. The Indian government on Friday welcomed their offer.

AFP adds: A US-based human rights group Tuesday condemned an attempt on the life of a Kashmiri human rights activist, accusing the Indian army and Border Security Forces of complicity.

Armed men were seen gathering outside the home of Jallil and Rabi chairman of the Kashmiri Commission of Jurists on January 29, human rights Watch Asia said in a statement.

Three men in the same group abruptly left Andrab's home when they were questioned about their claim that they wanted to discuss human rights case with him, the statement said.

But human rights Watch Asia described the threats against him as part of a 'pattern of violence and intimidation designed to silence Kashmiri human rights activists.'



Some documents at the taxation office at Segunbagicha in the city were set ablaze by pickets yesterday. — Star photo

Launch movement to oust illegal BNP govt: WP

The Workers Party of Bangladesh has called for launching a movement from tomorrow (Feb 16) soon after the election to topple the 'illegal BNP government,' reports UNB.

In a pre-polls statement yesterday, Workers' Party President Amal Sen and General Secretary Rashed Khan Menon said: 'The farcical election has already been rejected and abandoned by the people.'

The election, because of its 'lack of political validity,' will not be acceptable to the people, the joint statement said. 'Through this election, the Government has begun its journey towards a fall,' the statement added.

Khaleda imposes undeclared ML, says Nasim

Awami League leader Mohammad Nasim yesterday said Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has imposed 'an undeclared martial law' to protect her power, reports UNB.

Addressing a rally at Mahakhali Railway crossing in the afternoon, he said Begum Zia wants to perpetrate her power by repressing and torturing the people.

'Her fall is only a matter of time,' Nasim told the brief rally reportedly obstructed by police and army.

Gulshan Awami League leader Tipu Munshi presided over the meeting addressed, among others, by Adv Shahrar Khatun and Rajjuddin.

The Midnight File

Jordan, Kuwait normalise ties

AMMAN, Feb 14: Jordan and Kuwait have agreed to overcome their rift caused by the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis and normalise their relations, an envoy of Kuwait's Crown Prince said here today, reports AFP.

Asia-Europe summit Ministers start arriving in Bangkok

CHIANG MAI, Thailand, Feb 14 (AFP): Economic ministers from 10 East Asian countries began arriving here today to prepare for next month's Asia-Europe summit in Bangkok and stake out a joint plan of action, reports AFP.

The ministers were to discuss economic issues of common concern for their leaders to raise with their 15 European counterparts at the summit on March 1-2, Singapore Minister of Trade and Industry Yeo Cheow Tong said.

Asian countries have been promoting the economic aspects of the summit, saying the unprecedented meeting is a key step towards boosting the relatively low level of trade and investment between the continents.

'Southeast Asia cannot only look East and neglect the West, in the same way Europe cannot afford to ignore the rest of the world,' Thai Deputy Prime Minister Annuay Virawan told reporters.

'We have APEC, which may be one of the most progressive regions in the world but we cannot afford to ignore other parts of the world, in the same way Europe cannot afford to ignore Asia,' he said.

Knesset to be dissolved

JERUSALEM, Feb 14: Taking a first step toward early elections, Israel's parliament voted overwhelmingly today to dissolve itself but set no new date for elections, reports AP.

In a preliminary ballot, the 120 legislators voted on five separate bills to dissolve the parliament, or Knesset. The bills contained different dates in May for holding elections. Each bill won the support of three-fourths of the legislators.

The proposed legislation will be brought back before the plenum next week for a first reading.

Turkish embassy car set ablaze

By Staff Correspondent A car of a foreign mission was set ablaze at Banani in the city last night. The car reportedly belonging to the Turkish embassy was set on fire when it was parked in front of a house at Road No. 7 Banani. Unidentified persons, set fire to the car at around 9:30pm. Gulshan police said.

The cause of the attack could not be known immediately, police added. An emergency mobile patrol team from Gulshan thana rushed to the spot.

World Cup

From Page 1 yesterday morning but were forced to retreat indoors by the inclement weather. Stadium officials said the covers had been on the pitch since late on Tuesday and would be kept on until just before the start of the match.

Rain last week had left the traditionally flat Rawalpindi pitch with some grass, which South African coach Bob Woolmer said would help his team's pace attack.

AFP adds: Cricketers were left bewildered yesterday after conflicting reports over whether the match would go ahead.

Today's Group B game was initially called off by Rawalpindi city commissioner Javed Iqbal Awan yesterday after a day of heavy rain. But South African manager Casim Docrat responded: 'We haven't been informed. Only the umpires can call the match off and we are still expecting to go out there Thursday.'

The Pakistan Cricket Board was just as dumbfounded by Awan's announcement and were hurriedly investigating the mix-up.

Awan made his announcement to the Associated Press of Pakistan, the national news agency.

Under World Cup rules, a new game could be started on Friday if both teams do not bat for a minimum of 25 overs on Thursday; cancellation would leave both sides with a point.

Emirates manager Vikram Kaul said: 'We come here to expose cricket to our people back home. We want our boys to be seen on television. If we play we will be helping our cricket more than if we get a free point.'

South African skipper Hansie Cronje added: 'Whether we play this game or not, we still have to beat the best sides if we're going to win the World Cup.'

Polls today

From Page 1 Reports received in the capital, however, said that ballot papers could not reach many polling stations and officials were assaulted by anti-polls activists.

Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina yesterday reiterated her call to the people not to 'legitimise' the ruling party by casting votes.

Of the 40 political parties and alliances, except the BNP, 10 have nominated candidates between 31 and 98.

Lanka

From Page 1 military were probing a massacre of at least 27 Tamil civilians by security forces as tension gripped northeastern Sri Lanka, defence officials here today said.

Local officials said an army unit ran amok and attacked villagers after guerrillas from the separatist LTTE ambushed and killed two soldiers in the district of Trincomalee on Sunday.

'At least 27 bodies have been found and about another 30 people have escaped with injuries,' a local official in Trincomalee, 260 kms (160 miles) northeast of here said by telephone.

After the massacre, the Tigers struck again and killed seven more security personnel and a politician from the Trincomalee town council, officials said adding that the latest wave of violence has triggered tension.

A defence ministry statement said that separate police and military police investigations have been launched. 'There will be an attempt to cover up,' a senior defence officer said. 'Those who are guilty will be punished severely.'

Repatriation

From Page 1 nouncement of benefit packages by the Bangladesh government for their rehabilitation.

They said, the refugees expressed their willingness to return to Bangladesh during the visit of additional relief commissioner Ajit Das to six evacuee camps.

The sources said, the Indian government has also taken a fresh initiative to repatriate the Chakmas. The process would begin just after the election was over in Bangladesh. Many refugees had returned to their homes at their own initiative following the announcement of packages.

However, the sources said, the leaders of the Jumma Refugees Welfare Association were against beginning of the third phase of repatriation on the plea that 'the situation was yet to normalise in the CHT.'

US congressman

From Page 1 United States. In the coming days, all segments of civil society in Bangladesh must reflect carefully on the link between political democracy and economic development,' he added.

He said as a member of the US Congress and the Asia-Pacific Sub-Committee he was following closely the rapidly unfolding events in Bangladesh. In fact, everyone in the world, who supports democracy, is hoping that Bangladesh can meet the current political challenge successfully and move forward, he said.

Brown said, 'Bangladesh stands at an important crossroads. In recent months, the West has begun to understand the enormous potential that exists in Bangladesh. The New York Times, the most influential newspaper in America, recently ran a lengthy story about Bangladesh on the front page. I have advanced in congressional hearings the theory that Bangladesh might be the next Asian economic tiger and a strong trading ally of the US.'

'Hillary Clinton's visit helped raise the profile of Bangladesh in the world community and micro-enterprise programmes such as the Grameen Bank have planted the seeds for sustainable development.'

'The perception that Bangladesh democracy has fallen victim to narrow political agendas or to the force of arms would take years to correct-years that in my opinion should be devoted to strengthening democratic institutions and forging economic ties to industrialised nations.'

Hasina alleged that so far, 14 people had been killed by the terrorists of the BNP and law-enforcing agencies during the anti-election movement and 23,000 people arrested.

The Awami League chief demanded immediate release of those arrested and punishment of the killers.

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Printed & Published by A. S. Mahabub, Managing Director, on behalf of MediaWorld Ltd, 42, Mitkhil C/A, Dhaka-1000, from City Publishing House Ltd, 90, Kaptai, Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: Room No. 11, Road No. 3, Dhanmondi B/A, Dhaka-1205. PABX: 600092-4, Central: 600091 (Direct), Fax No: 88-02-963035, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA.

5 more killed in Karachi

KARACHI, Feb 14: Five people, including two activists of the opposition Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM), were killed in the strife-torn Pakistani commercial capital Karachi during the past 24 hours, police and hospital officials said today, reports AFP.

One MQM activist was killed today in an early-morning gunbattle with police, while the bullet-riddled body of a man was recovered in the city centre, police said.

Police said MQM militant Mohammad Qutubuddin was killed during an exchange of gunfire with police, while his colleagues fled the scene.

Three people, including two from a MQM breakaway faction, the MQM-Haqiqi, were shot dead by a group of unidentified armed men in overnight violence elsewhere in the city.

The MQM, which represents Urdu-speaking migrants who came from India after the subcontinent's partition in 1947, accuses the government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of killing its activists in police custody.

BCI

From Page 1 The scheduled banks and development financing institutions (DFIs) will take shares of Taka 12 crore while the rest Taka 60 crore will be subscribed by the depositors of defunct BCI.

In case the depositors and banks fail to subscribe their amount of shares, the shareholders will be responsible to buy them.

The MD of the bank, R A Chowdhury, was a General Manager of Bangladesh Krishi Bank and is now on leave preparatory to retirement.

The Chairman-designate, Mahbubul Amin Khan, was a former deputy governor of the Bangladesh Bank.

Meanwhile, the seizure order of branches and documents of BCI following the closure of the investment company has been withdrawn for handing them over the new management.

Hasina

From Page 1 day,' she said. In a statement Hasina said: 'Holding a mock election ignoring people's demand is totally undemocratic and illegal.'

The entire nation has rejected this poll, said the Awami League president, adding it is unfortunate that the government is going to hold a 'one-party' election when the nation was conducting agitation for election under a neutral non-party caretaker government.

'After 1991, we have seen the BNP government push the country towards destruction through terrorism, killing, corruption and incompetence. It has snatched the voting rights of the people violating the constitution.'

Hasina said the lives of the people became miserable for terrorism, police action, distortion of history, unemployment, insecurity, economic stagnation, poverty and misuse.

'We want to get rid of this situation, a political stability and running of the country in a democratic manner so the majority cannot be victimised by the vested quarters and they can enjoy the basic rights guaranteed in the constitution,' she added.

Hasina alleged that so far, 14 people had been killed by the terrorists of the BNP and law-enforcing agencies during the anti-election movement and 23,000 people arrested.

The Awami League chief demanded immediate release of those arrested and punishment of the killers.

N Korean breaks into Russian embassy killing 3

MOSCOW, Feb 14: An armed North Korean demanding political asylum shot his way into the Russian embassy compound in Pyongyang today, killing three North Korean guards and wounding a fourth, Itar-Tass news agency said, reports Reuters.

The Russian agency, reporting from the North Korean capital, said the man was armed with a pistol and had threatened to kill himself if his demands for asylum were not met.

Tass said the gunman was a state security guard aged about 25. Negotiations on his demand go under way involving Russian diplomats and North Korean authorities.

The intruder shot dead three North Korean guards and wounded another before forcing his way into the Russian trade mission building, set in grounds near Pyongyang centre which also house the Russian embassy and diplomatic quarters, Tass said.

No Russians were hurt in the incident.

In Moscow, a deputy foreign minister, Albert Chernyshev, was quoted as saying the incident would take 'some time' to resolve.

UN tribunal for Bosnia starts trial May 7

THE HAGUE, Feb 14: The United Nations war crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia said today it had set May 7 as the date for the start of its first trial, reports Reuters.

Bosnian Serb Tadic will be the first suspect to stand trial before the tribunal, the first international body for the prosecution of war crimes since the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials held in the aftermath of World War Two.

Tadic is accused of murdering, raping and torturing Muslims and Croats at the notorious Omarska Prison camp in northwest Bosnia in 1992.

He is the only one of the tribunal's 52 indicted persons — 45 Serbs and seven Croats — to be held in tribunal custody.

Tadic has been held in a prison cell in The Hague since April 1995 when he was handed over to the tribunal after his capture by Germany.

Meanwhile, the NATO council reaffirmed today that it wanted NATO troops serving with the Bosnia peace force to arrest suspected war criminals in Bosnia, in line with their mandate, a top NATO official said.

At its weekly meeting the council, the highest political body in the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance, agreed that NATO 'must do all it can to help the international criminal tribunal on the former Yugoslavia,' the official said, requesting anonymity.

Violence marks first day of hartal

From Page 1 pickets and police were also reported from Jatrabari.

Defying a ban on holding rallies and processions, the city unit of Awami League and pro-AL Sriramik League held separate rallies at Bangabandhu Avenue and near Press Club.

Jamaat also brought out a procession from the north gate of the Baitul Mokarram mosque. A procession of Gonaatir Chhatra Front was dispersed by police at noon and police nabbed two student leaders from the spot at Topkhana Road.

All modes of transports, excepting few rickshaws remained off the roads while most of the offices remained closed in the city.

Rail communications throughout the country came to a standstill. A Narayanganj-bound passenger train came under brickbats at Ganderia around 8:30 am. The driver of the train was injured.

Only three trains could leave the Kamalapur Rail Station yesterday of which only one reached its destination. The rest got stranded near Tongi station. Railtracks were uprooted at various routes.

Railway sources said parts of railtracks were removed in at least four places — in between Naserpetua and Sonaimur stations near Feni, between Sharishabari and Tarakandi in Jamalpur, between Gouripur and Shyamganj in Mymensingh and between Abdulpur and Lokmanpur stations in Natore.

At least five pairs of tracks were removed by anti-election activists near Sharishabari station in the early hours, the sources said.

Pickets forced railway officials and employees in Rajshahi, Lalmonirhat and Chittagong out of their office rooms.

One flight of the Indian Airlines and four out of 10 domestic flights were cancelled, said sources at the Zia International Airport.

Our Narayanganj Correspondent reports: Twenty-five polling officials were injured when a section of workers of the Adamjee Jute Mills attacked a presiding officers' meeting at Adamjee Sriramik Kalyan Kendra in the morning at around 10:30 am.

Some of the polling officials were forced into a nearby pond and were compelled to swear that they would not perform their election duties today. At 11 am, police rescued the officials.

Eight seriously injured polling officials, who are teachers of Adamjee Sriramik Kalyan High School, were admitted to hospital.

Our Staff Correspondent from Sylhet reports: Seven Opposition activists were arrested in Sylhet town and Biswanath thana and six

others in Moulavibazar district yesterday for alleged anti-election violence.

Our Sirajganj correspondent reports: Anti-election activists set ablaze the Election Commission office at Raiganj while 25 persons were injured in a clash between police and anti-election activists.

Our Natore Correspondent adds: Two presiding officers, Shajahan Ali and Prof Dilip Kumar Khan, were seriously beaten up by anti-election activists at Gurudaspur. They were admitted in to the Sadar Hospital. Seven persons were arrested by police.

In Rangamati, five brigade persons including the station officer were injured when some anti-election activists hurled a petrol bomb on a fire service vehicle near Kakali Cinema Hall at around 7 pm Tuesday. Of the injured, driver Nizam Mia (35) and Asaduzzaman (32) were admitted to a local hospital in a critical condition.

Our Brahmanbaria Correspondent reports: An assistant presiding officer, Abdul Alim (50), lost his leg and 10 other polling officials were injured in a series of bomb blasts at Sadar Thana Complex around 10.45 am yesterday.

Alim, also a teacher of Chandpur Tamjuddin High School, received serious injuries in his left leg and lost consciousness when anti-polls activists hurled at least 20 bombs at an election training meeting there, witnesses said. The activists gheraoed the venue till 12 noon and the officials came out afterwards chanting slogans, 'we will not go to election, till security is ensured.'

In a separate bomb blast, two polling officers were hurt at the Koeba Thana Complex.

Our Khulna Correspondent reports: Two BNP offices in the city were ransacked and the WASF office was attacked by anti-polls activists yesterday morning.

In Kishoreganj, 40 people were injured in separate attacks on TNO offices in Kotiadi, Pakundia and Hossainpur where polling officials went to receive ballot papers yesterday morning.

The attackers beat up the officials and set fire to the hall room of Kotiadi TNO office and ransacked the two other TNO offices.

In Kurigram, one polling official was injured in a bomb attack at the TNO office in the morning following meeting of polling officials. Opposition activists also ransacked a BNP office at Chilmari thana headquarters.

In Jhalakathi, two polling centres at Koibortykhali Govt Primary School and Baribakpur High School were burnt Tuesday night. Opposition activists also damaged

Gunmen kill 11 in Colombia

BOGOTA, Colombia, Feb 14: Gunmen killed 11 banana workers today after pulling over their bus in a violence-torn region of northwestern Colombia, police said, reports AP.

Authorities blamed the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, a leftist rebel group that is feuding with the army, former guerrillas and right-wing paramilitary groups.

The bus was heading to a banana farm when gunmen stopped it at a roadblock near Carepa, 280 miles northwest of Bogota, police Col. Libardo Molina told RCN radio.

The municipal post office, BIWTC ticket counter, works department office and thana land office yesterday.

In Lalmonirhat, anti-polls agitators foiled distribution of ballot papers among polling officials of Lalmonirhat-3 constituency by gheraoing the district Election Commission office in the morning.

Our Rangpur Correspondent reports: One independent candidate was stripped of clothes yesterday in the town. A polling centre at Ganeshpur Government Primary School Tuesday and the Gobindganj telephone office was ransacked.

Our Dhendah Correspondent reports: Opposition activists harassed presiding officers in the town and ransacked a BNP office in Hari-nakundia and blasted scores of cocktails during the hartal hours.

In Comilla, bomb explosions rocked the residence of a BNP candidate from Comilla-7, Abu Taher, in the morning and the district council bungalow at Bagicha-gang at around 1 pm.

Anti-election activists removed sections of rail tracks in Burichang, Homna and Laksham and damaged the engine of a goods train in Bijoypur and assaulted the driver.

In Meherpur, at least 20 persons were injured in a clash between police and anti-election activists while eight presiding officers were reportedly kidnapped from Meherpur.

Our Pabna correspondent reported that some 300 people chanting anti-election slogans snatched away election materials from Dwpchar polling centre while presiding and polling officers of two other centres were forced out of their offices.

Our Sherpur correspondent reported that some unidentified people set fire to the office of ADC (Revenue) of Sherpur at 9:30 pm after pouring petrol. However, fire fighters put out the fire immediately.

Two persons received bullet injuries when police opened fire to disperse an anti-election procession in Sherpur last night. No election material could be transported to the polling centres in the district as anti-election activists gheraoed all five TNO offices till late last night.

In Habiganj the opposition activists allegedly snatched ballot papers and other election materials from security personnel at Jatrappasha in the morning.

Police said anti-election activists also kidnapped Sheikh Azizul Huj, a candidate from Habiganj-1 constituency, from Dakgar area yesterday morning.

MTV

From Page 1 cial launch of the channel today.

Initially MTV channel would carry three-hour India specific programmes made in this country itself. The timings would be eventually increased to four or more hours by the end of the year, Ms Sahgal said.

She assured that MTV programmes, which had raised apprehensions among parents and teachers for their boldness, would be screened after 'responsible' censors of the network cleared them.

Polls centres

From Page 1 cials in a letter to the TNO, declined to perform their election duties.

In Comilla, Comilla district unit of Bangladesh Ministerial Karmachari Samity, in a letter to the Returning Officer declined to perform their duties while anti-election activists snatched ballot papers from the Ansars at Shaltaha village in Brahmanpara thana.

In Sylhet, 35 presiding officers, in a petition to the Assistant Returning Officer and TNO sought to be relieved of their duties.

In Kishoreganj, election officials did not receive ballot boxes and papers in Pakundia, Katiadi, Tarail and Sadar thanas till yesterday evening.

Clinton

From Page 1 For several months, Clinton himself has been talking of the need to curb the number of illegal immigrants.

In June and September 1995, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) carried out massive crackdowns in six southeastern US states.

CEC

From Page 1 'enough measures' in this regard.

In an address to nation over Radio and TV the CEC yesterday made an ardent appeal of the countrymen to perform their civic duties by casting their votes in today's parliamentary polls.

He said that the members of the law enforcing agencies and armed forces would help voters cast their votes.

Justice Sadeque called upon the officials and employees, entrusted with the responsibilities of conducting the polling, to perform their onerous duties courageously in the face of current unrest.

He assured them of the adequate measures taken by the Election Commission to provide them safety and security. He, however, warned that any irregularity and negligence in conducting the elections would not be tolerated.

The Chief Election Commissioner made a fervent appeal to political leaders and workers not to obstruct voters from casting votes.

'All have rights to boycott the elections, held under any circumstances. But none has the right to resist others participating in the elections. This practice is undemocratic,' Justice Sadeque said. The CEC said: 'This election bears a special significance as it is being held in a different perspective. It has, therefore, become essential to maintain the democratic and the constitutional process.'