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The Daily Star

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Dhaka asked to revoke passports allegedly issued to 2 ULFA men

NEW DELHI, Aug 28: India has asked Bangladesh for revocation of Bangladeshi passports reportedly issued to two suspect ULFA "terrorists" who have landed in Switzerland recently, reports BSS.

Contradicting a report published in The India Express today, Foreign Office spokesman Tameez Ahmed told BSS that the story "has a number of serious errors."

The Express in its report said that India has lodged a strong protest with Bangladesh and issued a stern warning for issuing passports to ULFA terrorists.

Tameez Ahmed said that India and Bangladesh had a very cordial relations and the two countries closely with each other very closely on issues of mutual interest.

As part of this bilateral discussion, he said, "I mentioned to Bangladesh High Commissioner about information received."

JS session is likely to be brief but stormy

By Nurul Kabir

The seventh Jatiya Sangsad (JS) that goes into its sixth session tomorrow is likely to be brief but stormy.

The six-day session will witness general discussions on two issues — foreign policy and terrorism — and a 'short discussion' on the problems of the jute sector.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the JS Business Advisory Committee yesterday evening.

The meeting decided to extend the Prime Minister's question-answer time on Tuesdays to 30 minutes from 15 minutes.

Besides, the major opposition party in parliament, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), is planning to seek discussion on issues like price hike of essential commodities including petroleum products, 'deteriorating' law and order,

'repression' on political opponents by the government and the Prime Minister's three-week stay with her daughter in Miami, USA.

Awami League MPs are likely to criticise in parliament the birthday celebration of the Leader of the Opposition on August 15. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was killed on August 15, 1975.

The longstanding issue of forming parliamentary standing committees on various ministries did not come up for discussion at yesterday's meeting, chaired by Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury. The standing bodies, which were supposed to be constituted 'as soon as possible' are yet to be formed as the Treasury and the Opposition benches have still been engaged in a dispute over their shares of membership of the

committees.

The sixth session is also expected to witness introduction of a few important bills including one seeking formation of local government bodies at the grassroots level. Besides, two pending bills, one of those seeking re-naming of the President's Awards for successful farmers after Bangabandhu, is likely to be passed during the session.

The main reason behind the forthcoming session being a brief one is that both the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker are scheduled to go abroad in the second week of September, sources pointed out.

Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury is scheduled to fly to Mauritius on September 11 to attend the 43rd annual conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. Chow-

Pak envoy says No self-confessed killers will be allowed to stay in Pakistan

Pakistan High Commissioner to Bangladesh Karam Elahi met Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan for the second consecutive day yesterday, reports UNB.

They discussed the situation arising out of the reports that the self-confessed killers of father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had been staying in Pakistan.

When contacted over phone, the Pakistan High Commissioner described the reports as "totally untrue."

"None of the self-confessed killers of Bangabandhu is in Pakistan," the envoy said.

"Pakistan wants best relation with Bangladesh. Bangladesh is our friend. There is no scope of misunderstanding between the two countries," Elahi added.

A press release issued by the

Report on education boards Widespread financial irregularities found

A task force reviewing the performance and management of country's education boards found widespread financial irregularities involving crores of taka in five years since 1991, reports UNB.

It also identified the role of different organisations and individuals in these anomalies.

Convener of the Task Force Dr Nazrul Islam submitted its report to Education Minister ASHK Sadique at the Education Ministry yesterday.

The Task Force, formed at the directive of the Prime Minister, reviewed the audit reports and other documents of the education boards between 1991 and 1996.

Different aspects of the activities of all the education boards were evaluated by four sub-committees of the Task Force in the last four months.

The Task Force in its report recommended various effective

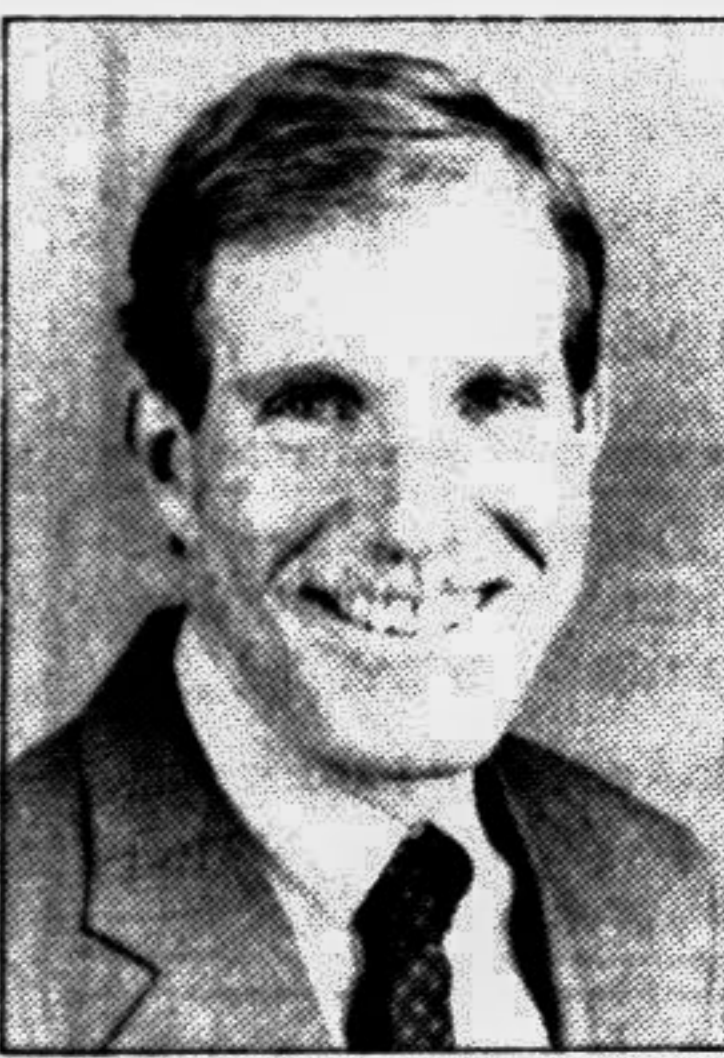
Depression Storm may lash coastal dists this morning

By Special Correspondent

The south-western coastal districts and off-shore islands are expected to be pounded by high winds and heavy rains whipping storm surges up to five feet above normal tide early today, the Met Office said last night.

The south-western coast have already been under the influence of a depression late yesterday evening that brewed off a low hovering over the north Bay since Wednesday. It was moving towards the Orissa coast. It was centred 360 km south-west of Khulna city yesterday noon.

As its core packing winds upto 50 kph in gust or squalls crosses the coast, heavy rains whipping storm surges up to five feet are likely over the normal tide in the coastal districts of Khulna, Bagerhat, Satkhira, Pirojpur, Barguna, Patuakhali, Barisal and the off-shore islands.



New US envoy arrives

New US Ambassador to Bangladesh John C. Holzman arrived in the city yesterday, reports UNB.

He replaces Ambassador David N. Merrill.

Ambassador Holzman yesterday said that he hoped to work with Bangladeshis in both public and private sectors to strengthen the already-strong economic and political ties between Bangladesh and the United States.

Senior officials of the US

Only 115 MPs return green passports Use of red passports not properly monitored

By M Anwarul Huq

No efforts are made by any government department or agency to monitor the proper use of diplomatic passports once those are issued.

Diplomatic passports, popularly known as 'red passports', are issued by the Consular Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Neither the Home Ministry nor the Office of Passports and Immigration are forwarded with the list of persons who are given diplomatic passports.

The existing rules were put into effect through an administrative order on April 25, 1990. As per the rules, all Members of Parliament, their spouses, and their children upto a certain age

are entitled to diplomatic passports.

The Chief Justice and all judges of the Supreme Court, all Secretaries of the government and army officers of the rank of Major General and above are also entitled to have a diplomatic passport.

According to the entitlement category, all past presidents who enjoy pension facilities, all those who are not actually ministers but enjoy the status of ministers, the Chief Election Commissioner, the Attorney General, the Attorney General Chairman, Public Service Commission, Chairman, University Grants Commission, the Inspector General of Police, members of the Plan-

ning Commission are entitled to hold diplomatic passport.

The spouses of the persons who qualify for diplomatic passport are also eligible to be issued with such red passports in their own name.

Normally, as per Vienna Convention, diplomatic passports are supposed to be issued to persons engaged in missions to serve or represent the country abroad. As a rule, however, all officers and staff of Bangladesh missions, whatever be their nature of service have diplomatic passports.

It is learnt that the red passports are received by the Foreign Ministry through indent

Habib yet to regain full consciousness

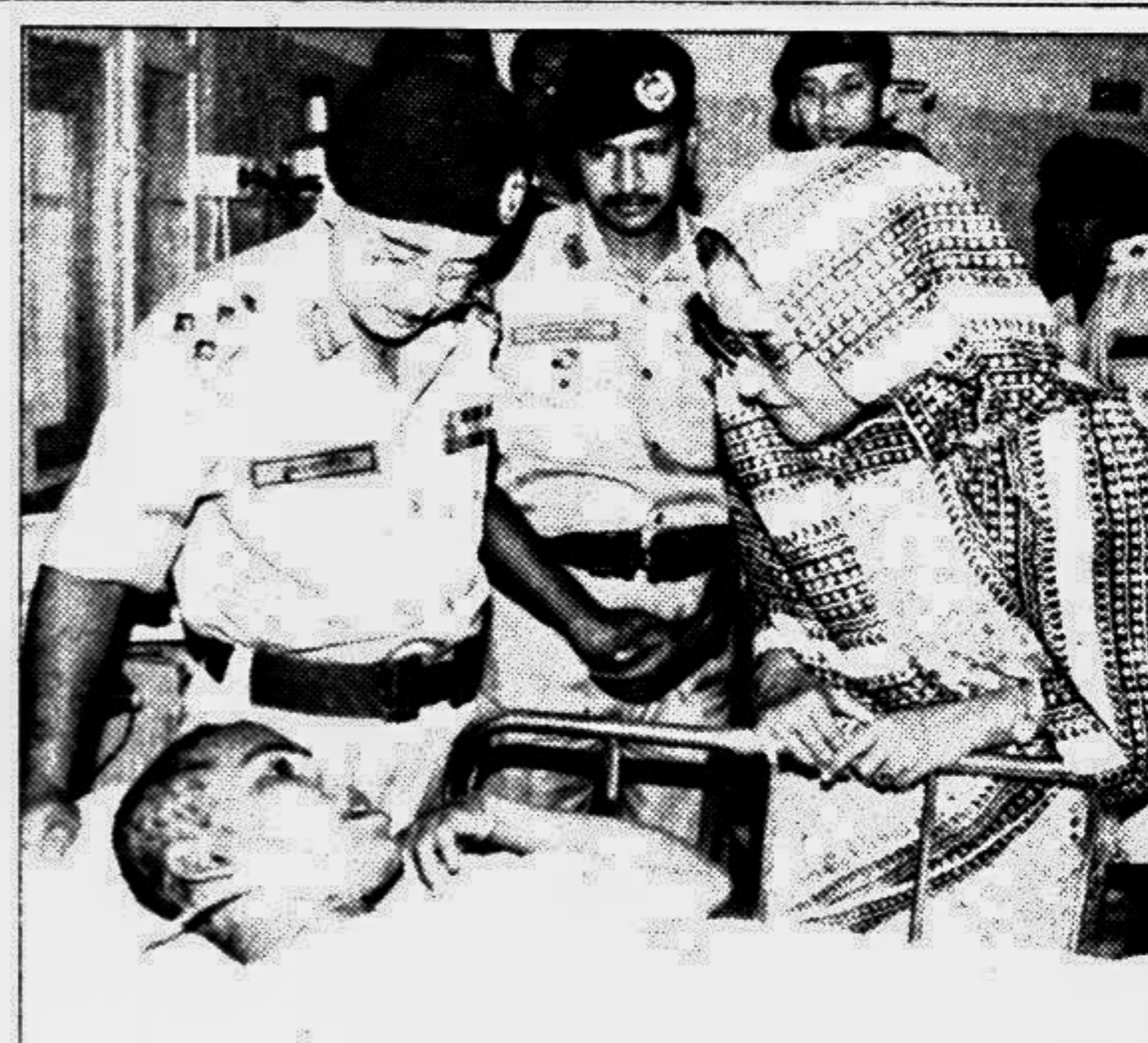
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday visited injured photo-journalist Habibur Rahman Habib at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH), reports UNB.

Habib, a photographer of Dainik Bangla, was injured in front of Jatiya Press Club during Sunday's hartal. He was shifted to CMH from Dhaka Medical College Hospital on Tuesday night in a critical condition.

The Prime Minister inquired about his condition and asked the attending doctors to take special care for his treatment.

BSS adds: The doctors informed the Prime Minister that Habib was improving gradually. "Although he has not regained full consciousness, he can talk and hear," doctors said.

Press Secretary to the prime minister Jawadul Karim and high officials of the CMH were present.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited injured photo journalist Habibur Rahman Habib of Dainik Bangla at the Combined Military Hospital in the city yesterday. — PID photo

Anwar, Aman & 7 JCD leaders get anticipatory bail

BNP leaders MK Anwar, Amanullah Aman, and seven JCD central leaders were granted anticipatory bail in two criminal cases by the High Court yesterday, reports UNB.

A Division Bench of the High Court comprising Justice AM Mahmudur Rahman and Mohammad Nurul Islam heard the two anticipatory bail prayers filed by nine persons in each case.

They are: BNP leaders MK Anwar and Amanullah Aman, JCD president Shahiduddin Chowdhury Anic, vice president Monzur Elahi, general secretary Habibur Nabi Sohel, organising secretary Monwar Hossain Rana, publicity secretary Monir Hossain, DU unit convener Nasir Uddin Ahmed and Jashimuddin Hall unit president Nurul Huq Zitu.

The accused surrendered in two criminal cases which were filed against them in connection with the bomb attack on

Govt impedes democratic process: Khaleda

NEW YORK, Aug 28: Bangladesh's opposition leader Begum Khaleda Zia met US Permanent Representative to the United Nations Bill Richardson Wednesday and discussed socio-political issues and human rights situation in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

The former Prime Minister came here Tuesday from Islamabad on her way to Los Angeles where she will open a three-day conference of the Federation of Bangladesh Association in North America (FOBANA) on Friday.

During the 45-minute meeting at the US envoy's office, Begum Zia raised various issues regarding the activities of the present government in Bangladesh.

Richardson visited Bangladesh twice when he was a US congressman.

Begum Zia told him that the present gov't is creating imped-

iment in the way of flourishing of democracy while her Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) was challenged by coercion, agitation, confrontation and destabilisation from the ruling Awami League.

The Leader of the Opposition in Bangladesh Parliament was accompanied by her Special Envoy Monzur Morshed Khan MP, former State Minister for Planning Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan and former Foreign Secretary Reza Rahman.

Briefing newsmen after the talks, Reza Rahman said the discussion was held in a cordial atmosphere. The US permanent representative was of the opinion that in Bangladesh, there was a need of tolerance to institutionalise democracy, he said.

"But, Richardson sensed that the country was passing through a political hardship," he added.

Fire incident Showcuse on govt, garments factories

By SC Correspondent

Upon a writ petition filed regarding two fire incidents in the garments factories at Mirpur, the High Court yesterday directed the government offices concerned and the respective garments units to showcase as to why their failure to ensure compliance with the relevant laws should not be declared to be illegal and unconstitutional.

The HC also directed the respondents to showcase within four weeks as to why they should not be directed to discharge their legal duties to ensure compliance with the relevant laws by taking appropriate steps.

Salma Sobhan, Executive Director of Ain-O-Salish Kendra, filed the writ petition.

It venture accords with BPC soon 5 multinationals may set up LPG bottling plants

By Sharier Khan

Six multinational oil companies, including Shell, Mobil and Exxon, are likely to sign final accords to invest in liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) bottling plants and production of lubricating oil to cater to the local market.

These companies are expected to go into joint venture with Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) and invest around 120 million US dollars for importing, bottling and marketing of around three lakh tons of LPG annually against a projected demand of 5 lakh tons, according to sources in the BPC.

Of the six companies, five — Shell (Holland), Mobil (US), Exxon (US), Caltex (US) and Petronas (Malaysia) — are to invest in the LPG bottling plants. It is projected that each of these companies will initially bottle and distribute over 5000 tons of LPG per month.

It is expected that the final accord between BPC and three companies — Shell, Caltex and Mobil — will be signed within a month. The remaining three agreements will also be signed in about three months.

Once the agreements are signed, the companies will set up bottling plants in Chittagong and Mongla within a year.

The LPG bottling and distribution will greatly ease the supply shortage in North Bengal. Although the projected LPG demands is about 5 lakh tons, currently BPC's Eastern Refinery in Chittagong produces only around 15,000 tons annually.

An LPG bottling plant set up recently by Kalastila Gas Field at a cost of Tk 14 crore will produce another 5,000 tons of LPG annually.

LPG is considered a very clean fuel which has the minimum damaging effect on environment. The cost of LPG is

CFTC to withdraw surcharge if congestion eases

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Aug 28: The Chittagong Feder Trade Committee (CFTC), a Singapore-based association of feeder vessel operators, is likely to withdraw the congestion surcharge imposed on the port early next month if the situation is found to have improved, sources concerned said.

CFTC has decided to send its representative within two days to Chittagong Port to see if the congestion has eased.

If the representative of CFTC gives a positive report after his return, the congestion surcharge might be withdrawn, the sources said.

CFTC took a decision in this regard in its meeting held earlier this week in Singapore.

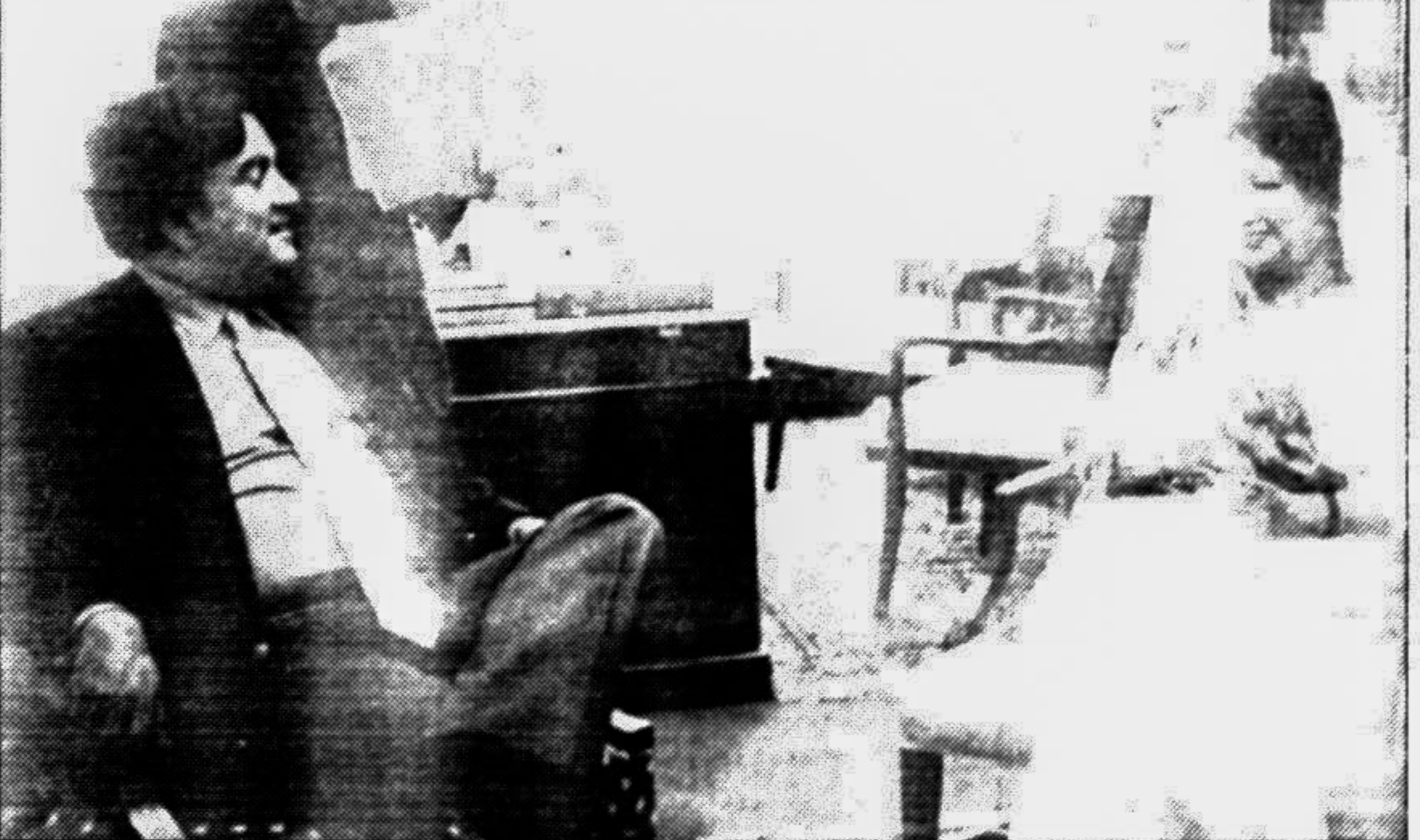
CFTC imposed the congestion surcharge on container cargo at Chittagong Port from August 16 at the rate of 150 US dollars against 20-foot containers and 300 dollars for 40-foot containers.

US Open Bad day for Iva Majoli

From Tawfiq Aziz Khan

NEW YORK, Aug 28: It has been a mixed day at the US Open with seeds skidding and fans leaving for home dejected with the results.

The biggest upset of the day was possibly the demise of Iva Majoli, the 1997 French Open champion seeded fourth here at the US Open. She went down to unseeded Sandrine Testud of France in three sets 4-6, 6-2, 1-6, the last set was almost a no



Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia called on US Permanent Representative to the United Nations Bill Richardson in New York on Wednesday. — Media Syndicate photo

Hartal in Khulna Four arrested in connection with Bablu murder

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Aug 28: Four persons suspected to be involved in the murder of BNP leader Iktaruddin Bablu were arrested Wednesday night.

The arrested persons were identified as Chora Bacchu, 25, Jamal, 22, Kamrul, 24 and Jahangir, 28.

Police said they were taken on five days of remand for interrogation.

UNB adds: A half-day hartal was observed in the city today in protest of the killing of Bablu.

City and district units of the BNP called the hartal demanding arrest and trial of the killers of Bablu.

No untoward incident was reported during the 6am-12 noon hartal that paralysed the city life.

Law breaker can't be law maker in India

NEW DELHI, Aug 28: India's autonomous Election Commission announced today that a person convicted by a court will not be allowed to contest legislative elections in the country, reports AP.

The decision will prevent a law breaker from becoming a law maker," said a statement issued by the commission.

The commission's decision will first be applied to state legislative assembly elections scheduled in eight of India's 26 states next year.

The decision also will bar those who had challenged their conviction in appellate courts.

In India, courts are notorious for delays in deciding cases, providing an escape to the accused.

The organised crime pervades Indian politics. A government report compiled by a top ranking civil servant two years ago said: "Crime syndi-

JRC meeting begins today

An Indian delegation led by the Water Resources Secretary arrived in Dhaka yesterday to hold talks with Bangladesh to find a permanent formula for sharing of water of the Teesta river, reports UNB.

The Secretary-level meeting of the Indo-Bangla Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) will be held on Friday-Saturday at the Teesta Barrage Project rest house, Abasar, in Hatibandha thana of Lalmonirhat district.

Indian Water Resources Secretary Mata Prasad will lead the in-member team in the talk while a 10-member Bangladesh team will be headed by Water Resources Secretary ATM Shamsul Huda.

Hanif's claim

MANIKGANJ, Aug 28: Mayor M. Anwarul Haque today said the development work accomplished by the present government during the last 14 months have surpassed all that were done by the past governments during the last 21 years, reports BSS.

The mayor was addressing a public meeting at the town hall as special guest as part of the central organising tour of the Awami League.

He said the government has solved the Ganges water sharing issue with India, and announced a pro-people budget keeping provisions of allowances and welfare for the aged and the poor.

Minister Momen MP, a president member of Awami League, was sent as the chief guest at the meeting.

Border clashes threaten Indo-Pak peace talks

ISLAMABAD, Aug 28: Pakistan's Foreign Ministry said today that peace talks with neighbouring India were in jeopardy after cross-border artillery firing last weekend left at least five people dead, reports AP.

While Indian officials insist they want the talks to go ahead, Pakistan's Foreign Ministry spokesman Tariq Alfat said India's reaction to the recent skirmishes raised serious questions about the 'viability' of the dialogue. Still, Alfat said, Islamabad has made no formal

decision to cancel the talks.

"We have to continuously assess the situation," he said.

Foreign Minister Goher Ayub Khan, speaking to parliament today accused India of provoking the clashes to give it an excuse for withdrawing from the talks aimed at improving relations between the two countries, which have fought three wars.

"But we will not let India do so," Khan was quoted as saying by Associated Press of Pakistan.

India's Foreign Ministry

spokesman reiterated today that he wanted the talks to go ahead. The deputy foreign ministers from both sides of the tense border are to meet in New Delhi next month, continuing a process that began in March. No date for the September talks has been set.

"India is completely committed to the dialogue process," said Talmiz Ahmad, the Indian spokesman. "We look forward to resuming the dialogue."

Clashes between Indian and Pakistani border troops are common, but the firing that

erupted last Saturday night and continued until Sunday was especially intense. At least two soldiers were killed on the Indian side and three civilians killed in a village in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, officials said. Ten Pakistani civilians were also wounded.

The neighbours have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir, which both countries claim and now is divided between them, since the subcontinent gained independence from Britain 50 years ago. Islamabad wants New Delhi

to allow the predominantly Muslim population of Kashmir to vote on whether to stay a part of India or join Pakistan.

India accuses Pakistan of funding and arming a Muslim insurgency which has left more than 15,000 dead.

Alfat said New Delhi was quick to blame Pakistan for the latest skirmishes, and indicated India was not willing to budge on the thorny Kashmir issue, a move he said threw the whole dialogue into questions. Pakistan says India fired first over the weekend.

Alfat called on India to accept "Neutral monitors on the line of control" to avoid disputes over any future clashes.

He also said Pakistan was ready to accept offers from third countries, including the United States and England, to mediate future talks.

India's longstanding position has been that the two neighbours should work out their problems in bilateral talks, and not involve outside mediators.

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