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Ganges barrage

Positive response from donors, PM tells JS

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said Bangladesh has got positive response from donors regarding the proposed Ganges barrage project, reports UNB.

Replying to Mirza Azam (AL) during the Prime Minister's question-answer session, she said Japan, Italy, India and the Netherlands have offered technical and financial assistance to conduct survey on the project.

Asian Development Bank (ADB) has committed to send a technical mission to Bangladesh soon to conduct a preliminary survey.

The Prime Minister assured that on the result of the survey report and estimation of expenditure, steps would be taken on priority basis to implement the Ganges barrage project.

Hasina said the government has taken urgent steps regarding the project.

Proposal for import of raw materials without opening LC okayed

The government yesterday approved the proposal for import of raw materials and capital goods without opening LC, reports UNB.

Another proposal for expansion of export credit to provide exporters with necessary financial cooperation was also endorsed at a meeting on formulation of new export policy.

The government is willing to give incentives to exporters and entrepreneurs to boost the country's export trade, Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed told the meeting.

He said an export policy would be formulated and existing inconsistency be removed with a view to enabling Bangladeshi exporters to cope with competition in the international market.

Tofael told the meeting that some sectors including tea, leather and garments had been identified as thrust sectors and

No progress in AL-BNP talks

BNP will continue to abstain from attending the Jatiya Sangsad proceedings unless its 14-point demand is fulfilled, Chief Whip of the Opposition Khandakar Delwar Hossain said last night.

"No progress has yet been made about our 14-point demand and the government has failed to create an atmosphere for our return to the House," Delwar told waiting newsmen after a meeting of the BNP Parliamentary Party at the Sangsad Bhaban.

"We'll end our abstention and go back to the House only after the government takes effective steps towards implementing our demands," he said. He was flanked by Deputy Leader of the Opposition Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury and other party lawmakers.

Earlier, Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury held a two-hour meeting with leaders of the Awami League and BNP at his chamber to break the stalemate.

By Staff Correspondent

The meeting was held "in a very cordial atmosphere", according to negotiators of both the sides.

"We're hopeful that the BNP will return to the House... We'll also have more talks (on the Opposition demands)", Deputy Leader of the House and LGRD Minister Zillur Rahman told waiting newsmen after the meeting.

"We held a cordial discussion aimed at reaching a consensus (on the BNP demands)", Delwar had said emerging from the meeting at about 3 pm.

Later talking to The Daily Star at his Sangsad office, Delwar said that the talks covered BNP's 14-point demand and the four-point accord it had signed with the ruling party back in January.

Asked whether his party found the ruling party sincere in resolving the Opposition demands, the BNP leader said, "Definitely they seemed to be sincere while discussing the matters but how can we say they're sincere to resolve the matters unless any steps are taken."

Talking to this correspondent, a leader of the ruling party who attended the meeting said,



Leaders of the ruling Awami League and Opposition BNP at a meeting convened by Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury at his Sangsad Bhaban chamber yesterday. Star photo

Power supply to 4 markets remains 'suspended for 22 days'

DESA office at English Road attacked

By Staff Correspondent

At least 10 people were injured yesterday when police hurled tear gas shells and charged batons to disperse angry people ransacking the DESA office at English Road, protesting 22 days' suspension of power supply in four markets at Sadarghat in the city.

The angry people from Sharif Market, Rupali Market, Yunus Market and Sieman Plaza attacked the Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) office at around 11 am and ransacked the premises.

They retreated when police lobbed tear gas shells and charged batons but later blocked the English Road for two hours from 11:30 am.

The injured persons were given first aid in clinics in the area.

According to some shop-owners in the markets, power supply in the four markets remained suspended for the last 22 days from August 12 after a transformer went out of order.

The market owners went to the local DESA office regarding resumption of power supply. A section of unscrupulous employees of DESA demanded Tk 2 lakh, the shop owners alleged. The market owners agreed to pay the amount.

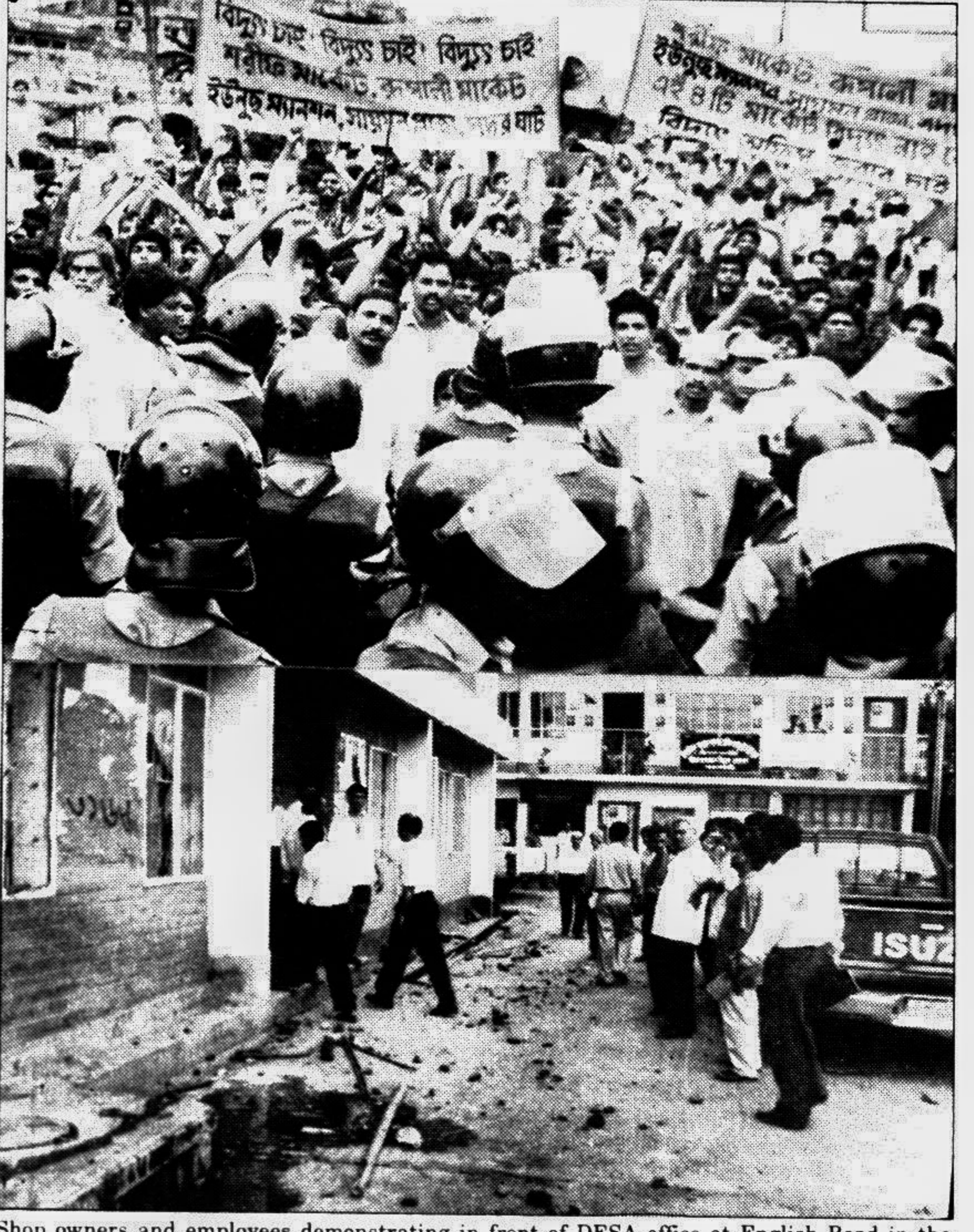
After a couple of days, the DESA employees dismantled the transformer and demanded an additional Tk 5 lakh, the market owners alleged. However, this time, the market owners declined to pay.

"Since then, there had been a series of arguments between the market owners and some DESA employees. We also tried to persuade them. But nothing worked," said a shopowner requesting anonymity.

After 22 days' of repeated requests, the market owners yesterday staged a demonstration in front of the DESA office.

The demonstrators in retaliation entered the DESA premises at around 11 am, damaged three cars and broke window panes before police dispersed them.

The local DESA authorities filed a case with the Kotwali thana in this connection, police said.



Shop owners and employees demonstrating in front of DESA office at English Road in the city yesterday to protest suspension of power supply in four markets at Sadarghat (top). The DESA office premises following an attack by protesters (above). —Star photo

\$2400 of ROK minister missing

Visiting South Korean Vice Foreign Minister Lee Ki Cho lost 2400 US dollars here, official sources said, reports UNB.

It is yet to be confirmed when and from where the VIP guest lost the currencies worth more than Tk 96,000, police said.

Police and intelligence agencies, however, questioned a number of employees of the State Guest House, Padma, after they were informed about the missing money yesterday afternoon.

US Open

Rios moves into qtr-finals

From Tawfiq Aziz Khan

NEW YORK, Sept 2: Marcelo Rios of Chile this afternoon reached the quarterfinals of the US Open defeating the two-time French Open title holder and number 7 seed Serg Bruguera.

This was a notable departure for the 10th seeded Rios who has by now earned the reputation of a 'marathon-setter' because

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Bangabandhu Murder Case

Coming down, Maj Noor said, 'My bullet has hit him':PW-11

By Staff Correspondent

As soldiers assembled for night parade at around 3:30 am on August 15, 1975, Maj Mohiuddin instructed them to carry out orders when the convoy marches towards Dhanmondi and also cautioned that failure might lead to court martial, Lance Dafadar (red) Bashir Ahmed, 11th prosecution witness in the Bangabandhu murder case told the court yesterday.

In his deposition Bashir said, "Our convoy started at around 4:00 am and at about 4:30 am our vehicle was parked on the road in front of President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's residence. We then disarmed the police there and took position to restrict free movement through that road."

"Then I heard the noise of gun fire and shouts of hands up. Then the noise of artillery gun shots were heard."

"At one stage I saw Maj Mohiuddin, Maj S H M B Noor, Capt Bazul Huda, Risalder Sarwar and a Subedar Major of Artillery going upstairs in hip fire position. Noise of gun shots from inside the house was heard and was followed by screams of men and women. The group came out of the house after some time."

"Before going upstairs along with the group, Risalder Sarwar had posted me at the gate ordering me not to allow anybody to enter or go out through the gate."

"When they came down, Maj Noor looked very angry. Noor also asked the Subedar Major to go and check if it was over saying, 'my bullet had hit him.'"

"Risalder Sarwar then told me 'everybody is finished.' On my further query about others in that house he said, 'Do not ask anything more.'"

"Later Maj Farook Rahman came to that house in a tank. As he got down in front of the gate of the President's house, Maj Mohiuddin, Maj Noor, Capt Bazul Huda, Risalder Sarwar, a Subedar Major of Artillery along with others swarmed around him. I could not understand the conversation between them as I was posted near the lake."

"In the afternoon I saw Maj Aziz Pasha coming there. Besides him other officers also came."

"One car carrying a foreigner was seen coming towards that house. I however, did not allow that car to enter."

During his deposition before the Court of District and Session Judge, Dhaka the PW-11

The Daily Star spot survey

Market dull, traders worried

Star Report

Retailers and wholesalers at city's Kawan Bazar, New Market and nearby Tongi Bazar report business transactions have gone down drastically over the last few months.

Jewellers say they haven't seen the market so dull in many years. Prices plummeted to lows that normally attract buyers.

"This time customers have been evasive," says Bablu Dutta Milton at Baitul Mukarram market.

"The situation is very bad. There is hardly any transaction," says Bablu Sarkar at Bismillah Rice Shop at New Market. "Business has been on decline since the fall of the Ershad regime in 1990. During Khaleda's period, we also did some business but now it is on the verge of collapse."

"There's not been much of a change in prices of medium quality rice in the last few years, he says."

Abdur Rahim, owner of Rahim Store at New Market, portrays the falling trend with figures for the last few months. "We sold five to six thousand taka worth of goods every day. Now it has come down to an average between two and three thousand."

Rahim says recent appearance of some home service retailers and increase in grocery shops in residential areas, along with ferruwallahs, may be one of the reasons why customers' presence in the market

Major changes in Gram Parishad Bill suggested

By Staff Correspondent

The Special Parliamentary Committee (SPC) after scrutinising the proposed Gram Parishad Bill, 1997, has recommended major changes in it.

The Bill, introduced in the House by LGRD Minister Zillur Rahman on Monday, proposed that the chairman of the village council would be elected directly by the people, while the members of the local body would be appointed by the government authorities concerned.

But the SPC report on the Bill, produced in the House yesterday, suggested that all the 12 members of the Gram Parishad, nine males and three females, should be elected at the general meetings attended by both the male and female voters of a ward.

The government authorities concerned will supervise the election.

It may be mentioned that Jatiya Party MP Abu Lais Mohammad Mobin Chowdhury opposed introduction of the Bill on the ground that the Minister's proposal for the Gram Parishad members to be appointed by the government authorities concerned was ultra vires to the Constitution. Article

Officers from other cadres being posted to Foreign Ministry

By M Anwarul Haq

Professionalism in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is gradually being affected with consequent effect on morale as officers from other cadres are being posted to the ministry in large numbers, according to informed sources.

In the last five months, seven officers of the rank of deputy secretary have been brought from other services into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and appointed as directors in the headquarters.

Besides, 12 senior assistant secretaries have also been brought in from other cadres and appointed on deputation to various positions in the headquarters in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA).

In addition, some 35 other applications for transfers to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are also learnt to be in the pipeline. All the pending applications are learnt to have been strongly recommended by influential political quarters. The pending cases are awaiting final approval by the higher authorities.

In many cases the directors and senior assistant secretaries appointed on deputation from other cadres are senior to their foreign service batch mates in service length but holding lower positions, creating anomalies and affecting proper functioning.

Not strict criteria has been followed in inducting officers from the other cadres. Initially, facing a shortage of personnel, the Foreign Ministry asked the Establishment Ministry to send 15 qualified officers from other services for appointment on deputation. A viva board was set up with senior officials but the board in the interview found a few officers 'suitable' for induction, it was learnt. Afterwards, several officers were inducted without following any specific criteria.

Presently, there are 44 sanctioned posts at assistant secretary level in the headquarters. With the entry of officers from other cadres, the existing posts are nearly filled up. In fact, continued inflow of officers on

Five die after taking liquor at brothel

TANGAIL, Sept 2: Five people have died and 25 others including prostitutes have fallen sick till today after taking liquor in the brothel here, reports UNB.

Police identified the dead as: Manzur Rahman, 40, Siddiqur Rahman, 42, and Sunil Kumar, 42, of Adl Tangail in Sadar thana, Kalu Miah, 40, of Kanchapara and Delkhous Miah, 35, from Kachuaadanga.

Of them, Manzur and Siddiqur died late Monday night at Tangail General Hospital, Sunil on way to hospital and Delk-

Dacoits stab young man to death in N'ganj

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Sept 2: A young man was stabbed to death by a gang of dacoits in a village near here early hours of today.

Police said, a gang of about 15 to 20 dacoits broke into the house of day-labourer Moti Mia at Pashchim Sharmandi village under Sonargaon thana at around 1:45 am and stabbed two of his sons indiscriminately before decamping with Tk 2,000 in cash and a black and white TV set.

Ashabuddin, 18, eldest son of Moti Mia, died on the spot while his younger brother Jashim, 17, was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with serious stab injuries.

On their way, the gang also committed dacoity at one Manman's house in a nearby village, Sajlar Char, and took away another TV set.

Steps to check fire incidents

Industrial zones to be set up for RMG units

A ministerial committee has suggested some immediate, mid-term and long-term measures to check fire incidents in the country's garments factories and minimise the extent of damage, reports UNB.

The suggestions were made yesterday at the first meeting of the ministerial committee, chaired by Commerce Minister Tofael Ahmed.

Home Minister Rafiqul Islam, Post and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim, State Minister for Labour and Manpower MA Mannan and State Minister for Jute and Textiles A K Faezul Huq attended the meeting.

The meeting decided to set up separate industrial zones for separate industrial zones for garments factories in Dhaka, Chittagong and other places as a long-term step considering the expansion of the RMG industry.

To formulate a comprehensive plan in this regard, the meeting constituted a committee headed by Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim.

The immediate steps include construction of emergency exit and alternative stairs in the factories, setting up of smoke detectors and automatic fire alarms, bringing workers and employees under compulsory group insurance scheme, regular visit of survey teams to check electric wiring, compulsory fire protection arrangements, keeping all stairs free from obstacles, regular fire demonstrations and ensuring first aid arrangements.

The mid-term steps are compulsory fire insurance scheme at all factories and reorganisation of rebate rate on premiums, training for workers and employees to enable them face emergency situation and ensuring building code in the construction of multi-storey buildings with provision of alternative stairs.

The ministerial committee identified fire as the main reason for the incidents. Other reasons are unplanned establishment of garment factories in residential areas, lack of wide stairs and emergency exits at most factories, fault electric wiring, want of fire-fighting equipment, violation of the



Diana's death

5 photographers under formal investigation

PARIS, Sept 2: A judge today placed five photographers under formal investigation for involuntary homicide and for failing to come to the aid of Princess Diana and the other victims while they lay trapped in the wreckage, reports AP.

The five — Nikola Arsov, of the Sipa agency; Jacques Langevin, of the Sygma agency; Laslo Veres, a freelancer; Stephane Darmon, of the Gamma agency; and Serge Armal of the Stills agency were freed from their own recognizance after being placed under formal investigation, a step short of being formally charged.

Can't I meet PM as an MP, says Ershad

By Staff Correspondent

Jatiya Party chairman H M Ershad said yesterday he met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Monday to discuss the overall political situation in the country.

"Can't I meet the Prime Minister as an MP and chief of a political party?", the former president told some newsmen at the parliament lobby when asked about his meeting with the PM on Tuesday. "I had a brief meeting of some ten minutes only."

The JP chief, however, evaded a direct reply to a question on withdrawal of his party's support from the Awami League government.

Ershad met Hasina after his reported public statement at a Bogra rally that his party would withdraw support from the AL government.