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Magurchhara Rly operates trial train thru' repaired tracks

From Iqbal Siddique

SYLHET, Nov 6: Bangladesh Railway today safely operated a trial train and a goods train through the repaired rail tracks passing through the Magurchhara gas field area.

A railway official now staying at Srimangal informed that a high level team from Dhaka including the Divisional Manager, Divisional Engineer and others reached Srimangal this morning. They operated a trial train at 10:45 am from Srimangal to the gas field area and talked to the Occidental officials there. Later, a goods train also came from Srimangal.

In the afternoon, another goods train from Kulaura was operated upto Akhaura. After operating the trains, the Railway officials discussed with the Occidental officials and decided to continue trial run of goods trains during the day time from

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Next round of Indo-Pak talks in Dec

NEW DELHI, Nov 6: India and Pakistan will hold their next round of talks aimed at improving their tense relationship in December, according to India's foreign minister, reports AP.

United News of India said Kamala Sinha did not set a date when she announced yesterday that the talks would be next month. The talks will be held in Islamabad, the Pakistani capital.

Three previous meetings at the foreign secretary level have yielded little, with the long-standing dispute over Kashmir hindering progress. Pakistan wants to discuss Kashmir's status, while the Indians would prefer to limit any discussion of Kashmir to security questions.

Pakistan and India have fought two wars over the Himalayas.

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Programmes of 3-nation summit discussed

The third meeting of the national committee for preparation of India-Pakistan-Bangladesh business summit was held in the city yesterday, reports BSS.

Presided over by Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, the meeting discussed the programmes of the proposed summit.

The business summit will be held in Dhaka on November 23. Prime Ministers of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh will attend the summit.

Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria, Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Chairman of the Privatisation Board Kazi Zafarullah, Foreign Secretary Mustafizur Rahman, former foreign secretary Farooq Sobhani, FICCI President Yusuf Abdullah Haroon and officials concerned were present in the meeting.

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on the Internet
<http://www.dailystarnews.com>

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Kibria, Saifur for consensus on economic issues

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi

Politics turned pleasant on the first day of the international investment conference yesterday when the finance minister and his predecessor set aside the bitter bellicosity between the ruling Awami League and the opposition BNP to put the nation's "economic interests" at the top.

Speaking at separate sessions, both, especially M Saifur Rahman who apparently thwarted a party move to force him to stay away from the conference, tried to offset fears of political instability polluting business environment.

Shah A M S Kibria, while listing the policy steps to facilitate foreign investment in his opening statement, sought to assure the participants that politics would not be a deterrent as he was only carrying

forward the reforms that the BNP administration launched.

"Certainly there are political differences, but both the major parties have agreed that free market economy would be the best for Bangladesh and the private sector is the engine for growth," he said. "This is our main advantage."

Rahman gave similar statements as he vigorously promoted Bangladesh's case as a contender for foreign capital.

"We are one of the best areas for foreign investment," the former finance minister told conference participants while chairing a session on financial sector reform, much of which he himself had initiated during his five years till 1996 as finance minister.

But Rahman's contribution to portray the mood of political

consensus had gone beyond his statements at the conference.

According to highly-placed BNP and business sources, he counterlobbied successfully to foil a move by some party leaders to "boycott" the conference. Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, a BNP MP and president of Chittagong Stock Exchange, also joined him to speak on capital market development. Chowdhury was learnt to have been instructed by some party leaders not to attend, the sources said.

Several business leaders and conference managers, Financial Times Conferences, also put in efforts to keep the event above political differences.

The official programme for the closing session today has a place for a chief guest without

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Peter Montagnon, the Asia Editor of Financial Times, chaired the opening session yesterday that saw Finance Minister SAMS Kibria define the government policies, World Bank vice president Miekio Nishimizu and Privatisation Board Chairman Kazi Zafarullah speak on investment climate in Bangladesh.

Interview with Pakistan Prime Minister It will take time, but we want to settle Kashmir issue

By Kuldeep Nayar

"I know it will take time to find a solution to Kashmir," Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said. "I am not expecting results tomorrow or the day after. Let it take years. But we must settle it. We should never become dependent nor stop talking."

These words spoken to me at Islamabad last week reflect the mood of growing number of Pakistanis. They are keen to discuss Kashmir but do not expect quick results. In fact, they do not even dwell on Kashmir during discussions, as they did until a few months ago. Even the argument that Kashmir

first and the rest later is heard less and less. Indeed, they appear anxious to have trade and contacts with the people in India and favour free movement between the two countries. They seem less deterred by the threats of fundamentalists and politicians. However, the atmosphere of fear has not disappeared completely.

Let all working groups meet simultaneously to discuss the seven "topics identified," said Nawaz Sharif. (The topics identified are Kashmir, security, peace and confidence-building

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Meghnaghat, Haripur power plants Donors concerned at delay in signing of agreements

By Sharier Khan

The signing of agreements for setting up of Meghnaghat and Haripur power plants in the private sector are being delayed although the government had announced the names of the lowest bidders two months ago.

According to official sources, the donor community, including the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, has expressed concern at the delay and indicated that continuation of such delay would affect credit programmes for the power sector.

AES, a leading US power company, was selected as the lowest bidder in for both the Meghnaghat and Haripur projects as it had offered power tariff of 2.79 cents and 2.73 cents per unit respectively. The rates are not only much below power generation cost of the Power Development Board (PDB) but also one of the lowest in the world.

Yet, the sources said, PDB which is handling the 350 MW to 450 MW Meghnaghat Power Plant Project is delaying the project on different pretexts, questioning the evaluation of

AES as the lowest bidder.

Similarly, the 360 MW Haripur project is awaiting clearance from the Energy Ministry for finalisation of negotiations with AES for the last two months.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) which is partly financing the Meghnaghat project has expressed its concern at the delay in implementation of the project.

A World Bank delegation at a meeting with Energy Ministry officials on Tuesday expressed

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Resolution of land disputes now core issue in CHT

By Reaz Ahmad, back from CHT

Resolution of disputes over land ownership is the core issue now before the administration in the three districts of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), particularly at a time when a peace accord to put an end to insurgency in the area is in the offing.

Talking to this correspondent, officials in Khagrachhari, Rangamati and Bandarban districts had one thing common to point out that necessity of land registration had long been neglected in the CHT for more than one reasons.

The culture of "zoom farming" made the tribal people nomadic and reluctant to land registration till the influx of non-tribal people from the plainland in late 70s. An agriculturalist explained to this correspondent that traditional "zoom farming" does not allow tribesmen to be settled in one particular hill for years together.

On the other hand, when Bengalee people from the plainland started settling in the CHT in a great number changing the demographic composition of the region, they were offered lands upto five acres per family. But, at a later stage when vio-

lence flared up in the CHT in mid-80s, many settler families moved to cluster villages to be under a better managed security safety net.

In Khagrachhari district alone, over one lakh settlers now live in 88 cluster villages. The number of settlers living in cluster villages in Rangamati is estimated to be around 10,000.

Afterwards, in the process of peace talks during the rule of successive governments, many tribal refugees were repatriated time to time and Bengalee settlers had to move from one

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Cyclonic storm moving towards Myanmar coast

By Special Correspondent

The cyclonic storm near the Bay changed its course yesterday evening and is likely to cross the Akyab coast of Myanmar this morning.

Sajedur Rahman, Director of the Meteorological Department, told The Daily Star last night that the storm moving north-westward veered to the right and eyed the mountainous coasts of Arakan.

It's sudden change of course was detected at 6 pm yesterday, some 800 km southeast of Chittagong on the Andaman sea where it turned into a cyclonic storm.

It was formed out of the remains of Typhoon Linda that battered the Vietnam and Cambodian coasts on Tuesday.

The Bay has become rough as the storm steered its north-easterly course, packing 70 kph winds rising to 85 kph in gusts or squalls.

Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been advised to keep hoisted Distant Warning Signal Number 2.

17 rescued from fake treatment centre in Demra

By Staff Correspondent

Detective police rescued 17 people including three women from a fake treatment centre for mentally retarded persons at Govindapur under Demra thana in the city Wednesday, police said yesterday.

Police also arrested two persons, including a woman from there. The arrested man, identified as Abdul Quddus, aged about 60 and his wife, Jahannara Begum, had been running the fake centre for about 21 years, police said.

They turned their big house into a "treatment centre" and cheated people over the years in the name of treatment. Quddus used to charge "admission fee" and took Tk 3,000 from every "patient" each month. They confined the "patients" in small "cells" and tied their hands with legs using chains.

Police said Quddus and Jahannara have no academic qualification but so long, they said they were MBBS doctors having foreign degrees.

Police said some of the "patients" had symptoms of serious skin diseases due to confinement in extremely unhygienic conditions. Police said Abdul Quddus, now a blind man had married four times in the past.

Police filed a case with Demra thana in this connection.

275 houses of Chakma refugees gutted in Tripura

AGARTALA, Nov 6: At least 275 houses of Bangladeshi Chakma refugees were gutted in a devastating fire that broke out in a government camp at Karbook in south Tripura district on Tuesday, reports PTI.

The fire originated from a kitchen of house, engulfed the entire area and gutted 275 houses, police said.

Meanwhile, a fire tender, rushing from Jatanbari of the district, overturned and fell into a ditch injuring 12 firemen. The injured were admitted to Jatanbari hospital. The five seriously wounded were later shifted to Udaipur district hospital, police said.

However, the fire was extinguished with the help of local people, police said.

25 injured in Khagrachhari clash

RANGAMATI, Nov 6: Twenty-five people were injured, 15 of them seriously, in a clash between two groups of people at a village market in Dighinala thana under Khagrachhari hill district today, reports BSS.

It was reported that the clash started in the morning following exchange of hot words over realisation of shop's dues at Chonga Chhari market.

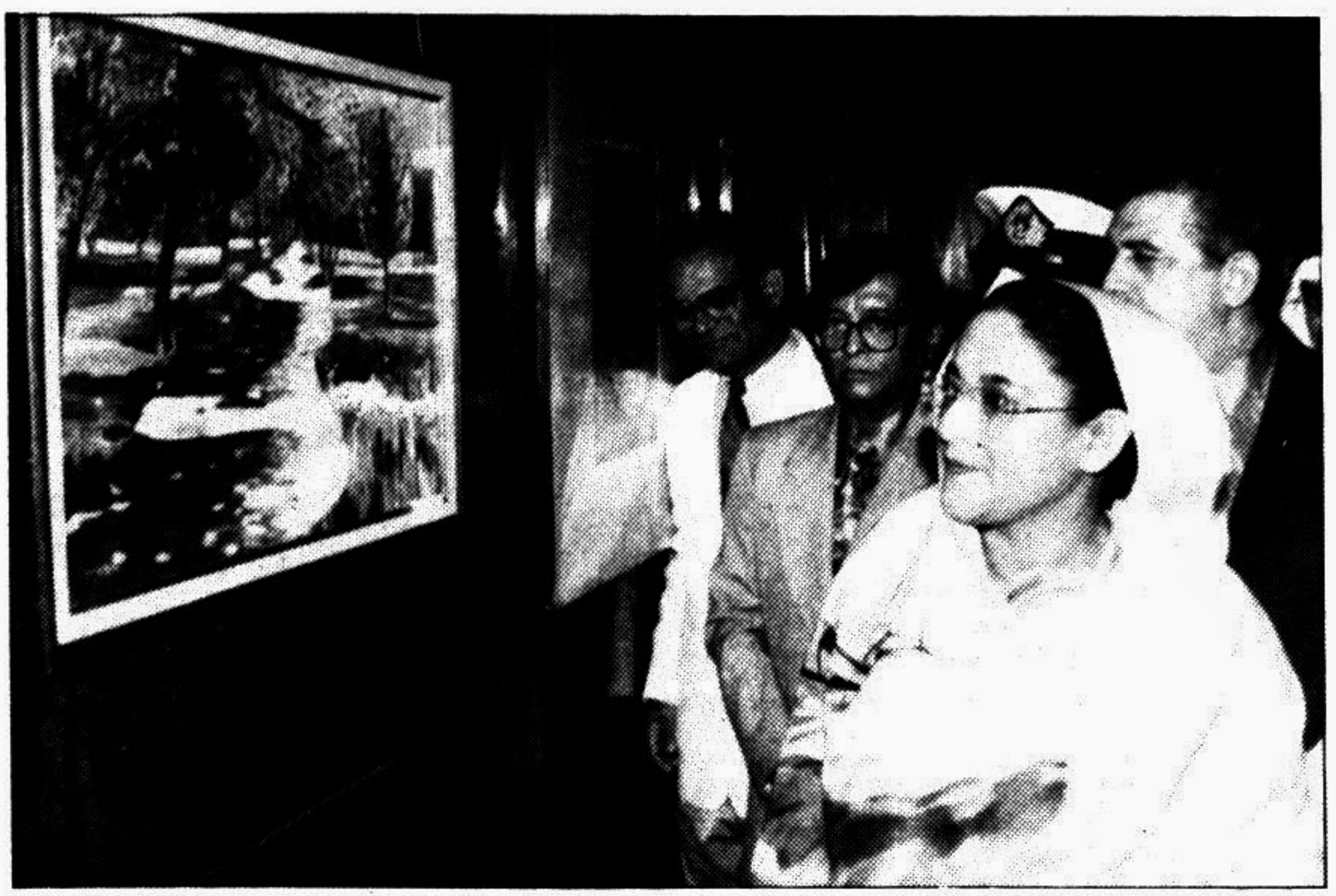
The critically injured were admitted to Dighinala health complex with multiple injuries, official sources said.

Two boys were reportedly missing. Two shops were gutted as a sequel to the incident.

Task Force on CHT meets in Ctg tomorrow

KHAGRACHHARI, Nov 6: The task force committee will meet in Chittagong on Saturday to discuss overall situation in CHT ahead of resuming the repatriation of tribal refugees from Tripura, reports UNB.

Chairman of the Task Force Committee on Refugees Kaiparjanjan Chakma MP, refugee leader Akshoy Moni Chakma, Chittagong Divisional Commissioner Sakshawat Hosain Khan, Local Government Council Chairman and DCs of the three hill districts will attend the meeting, officials said.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the eighth Biennial Asian Art Exhibition at the Osmani Memorial Hall in the city yesterday.

Opposition creating trouble without any issue: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday questioned the motive of the opposition agitation, saying they are hell-bent on creating trouble without any issue, reports UNB.

"Let the opposition leader say precisely what she wants. She should come to parliament and discuss grievances, if any," she said.

Addressing a press conference of the Overseas Correspondents Association of Bangladesh (OCAB) at Hotel Sonargaon in the afternoon, Hasina said how a solution could be found if the Leader of the Opposition did not specify her demands.

Asked about the concern expressed by the donors over the political instability here, the Prime Minister said for obvious reasons, she did not feel comfortable with the comments which she said are not graceful for the nation.

"But the question is what was the issue behind calling the hartal on that day that prompted the donors to make such a statement," she said.

Hasina said the Bangladesh Aid Group meeting was held for the first time in Dhaka "at our invitation." She deplored that an unwanted situation was created by calling hartal on that day.

The Prime Minister said her government was concentrating on economic development in a stable political atmosphere. "Democracy and development go hand in hand."

She said an atmosphere had been created to attract foreign investment in different sectors

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Khaleda for CPA role in holding fair polls

By Staff Correspondent

Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday sought a more effective role of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) in improving democratic as well as human rights situations in the member countries including Bangladesh.

The Chairperson of Bangladesh Nationalist Party was delivering the 'concluding address' at a post-election seminar jointly sponsored by the Jatiya Sangsad Secretariat and the CPA. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the three-day seminar on November 4.

Begum Zia said it was unfortunate that there had still been an undesirable situation in many 'constitutional democracies' like Bangladesh, where opposition views were being suppressed through imposition of ban on opposition rallies and processions.

"Growth of democracy and human rights situation is impossible in a country where the people are prevented from expressing their opinions through rallies and processions," Begum Zia said. In this regard, she referred to the Harare Declaration of the Commonwealth states and said that it was now imperative for the CPA to play a more effective role in improving

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Salary for no work

By Morshed Ali Khan

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has spent at least Tk 28 lakh to maintain staff in its Town Planning section without any relevant job to do for the last seven years, DCC sources said.

The two staff, one Town Planner and one Computer Operator, have never been assigned to do any job as per their professional expertise. Instead, the Town Planner has been writing minutes of meetings, answering letters from foreign agencies and sometimes helping the Engineering section prepare project proposals.

The idle days of the section might be over soon as, the sources said, DCC has taken some steps to fill up the originally planned 19 posts in the section.

Interview to recruit economists, sociologists, geographers, research officers, cartographers and computer operators will be held on November 15. The Chief Town Planner might come on deputation from somewhere else.

Asked why did it take seven years to feel the need of a full-fledged Town Planning section, a DCC official replied, "None cared for it."

The section was originally created with the idea of starting DCC-based town planning activities in its 360 square-kilometre area. The work was to continue in line with the master plan of the city.

A DCC source said the section might also be given the responsibility of monitoring implementation of decisions taken at the City Coordination

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PW-37 tells court Thakur drafted speech of Mushtaque

Taheruddin Thakur drafted the speech of Khandakar Mushtaque and the text of oath of allegiance of armed forces chiefs that were broadcast over radio on August 15 morning following the killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, reports UNB.

M Reazul Huq, the 37th prosecution witness in Bangabandhu murder case, said this at Dhaka District and Sessions Judge's Court yesterday. He also identified Thakur, then state minister for information, in the dock.

In his deposition, Reazul, then a radio engineer of Bangladesh Betar, also told the court that Thakur had changed the radio announcement of Major Dalim on August 15 deleting a sentence — "Sheikh Mujib has been killed."

He further said the then Deputy Army Chief Major General Ziaur Rahman, Col (retd) Abu Taher of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) and General MAG Osmani had also come to the radio station that morning.

This is for the first time that Thakur, the lone civilian accused in the case, has been

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Solidarity Day today

The main opposition party BNP and some other political and socio-cultural organisations will observe the National Revolution and Solidarity Day today, reports UNB.

In observance of the day, BNP, JSD, Jamaat-e-Islami, Jagpa and various socio-cultural organisations have drawn up elaborate programmes, including hoisting of party and national flags in their respective offices, offering fatiha, Quran Khwani, Milad Mahfil, discussion meeting and cultural function.

In a message on the eve of the day, BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia called upon the people to join the ongoing movement being imbued with the spirit of November 7.

She urged the countrymen to uphold the ethos and ideals of November 7, resisting all attacks by the "subservient forces."

Begum Zia said the historic 7th November facilitated Bangladesh to exist as an independent country.

Situation like Nov '75 again exists now: BNP

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan MP has said, "The situation that had led to the November 7 revolution in 1975 again exists in the country now."

Addressing a discussion meeting in the city yesterday marking November 7, he said the people and the soldiers fought together on this day in 1975 as people's hopes and aspirations were shattered and national sovereignty was jeopardised by the post-liberation government.

"Had there been no November 7, the future of the nation could have gone towards uncertainty," Mannan Bhuiyan said.

He alleged that the post-independence Awami League government was a subservient one and that it had killed 30,000 people

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3 of a family die of mysterious illness

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Nov 6: Three members of a family died of a mysterious illness at village Mairabond under Jakiganj thana today.

Jonai Bibi, 70, her son Manik, 40, and his wife, 30, died in their village home due to excessive bleeding from mouth, local administration officials said.

Jonai Bibi along with her son and daughter-in-law went to her brother's house Friday last on receiving the death news of one of her brothers. After the funeral and other rituals, they returned home yesterday. However, they suddenly fell sick this morning and started bleeding, resulting in their deaths.

The Thana Nirbahi Officer of Jakiganj visited the house this afternoon.

Triple murder 6 get life-term in Sylhet

SYLHET, Nov 6: Six people were awarded life-term imprisonment and 18 others to two years each in a sensational triple murder case, court sources said today, reports UNB.

The prosecution story, in brief, was that Pakhi Mia, Aziz Uddin and Jomshed Ali of a brickfield in Golapganj thana were killed on February 2, 1992 by the convicts following exchange of hot words with the brickfield owner Chhunu Mia.

The Judge of the Special Tribunal Rabul Alam after examining the witnesses and records awarded the punishment on October 30 acquitting eight others.