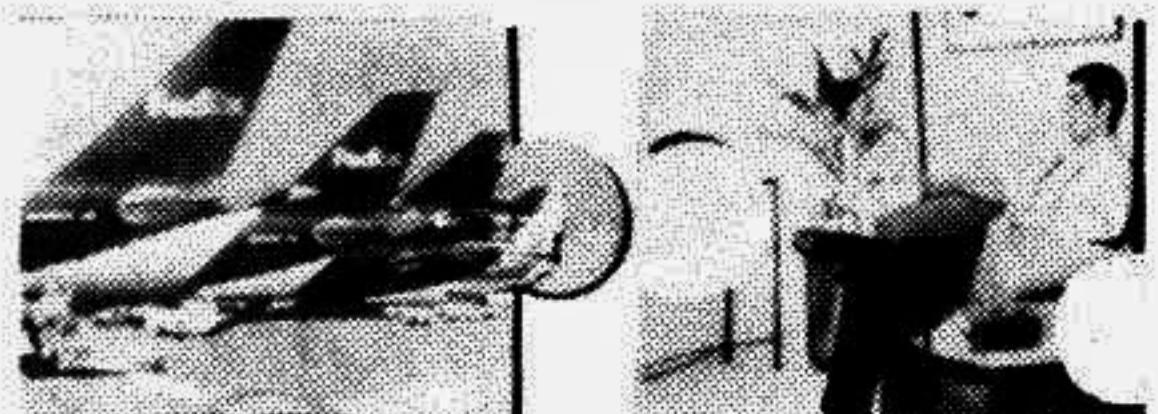


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Plane crash
in China
kills 61

BEIJING, Feb 24: A Chinese domestic airliner crashed today in southeast China, killing all 61 people aboard, the state-run Xinhua News Agency reported, reports AP.

The Russian-made Tupolev-154 with 50 passengers and 11 crew members exploded at 4:20 pm as it neared its destination of Wenzhou, a city in coastal Zhejiang province about 400 kilometers south of Shanghai, the state-run Xinhua News Agency reported.

Police and firefighters treated those injured during the accident, Xinhua said, apparently referring to people wounded on the ground.

"I heard it. There was a whirring sound and then an explosion. The sound was extremely loud," said a farmer in a village who said he was a few hundred meters from the crash site. "There was fire. It was very big."

One villager was injured, possibly by debris, and taken to a hospital, said the farmer, who refused to give his name in a telephone interview. He said the plane came down in fields.

Local officials said the plane crashed south of Rui'an, a city 30 kilometers south of Wenzhou.

First woman
pours chairman

Amen Begum became country's first elected woman municipal chairman, reports UNB.

She won election to Cheng-garchar municipality in Chandpur securing 6,734 votes.

Election Commission sources said Amen Begum defeated her nearest rival Mohammad Rafiqul Islam alias George by a margin of 3,030 votes.

In this pourasava, a total of 12,661 out of 18,013 voters cast their votes in the election held on Tuesday, sources said.

Ahmed Sharif

From Page 1
val Bangla literature, Sharif enriched the gamut of the language and the literature with many original contributions.

Author of more than 100 publications including some 40 original books of research and personal essays, he edited some 40 manuscripts of the mediaeval Bangla literature.

He also delivered 12 commemorative and institutional lectures - all embodiments of his scholastic views - at home and abroad.

Two volumes of his *Bangalee* and *Bangla Sahitya*, published between 1978 and 1983, are rated by the sub-continentals scholars as masterpieces. A major recognition came from the Rabindra Bharati University, India, which conferred upon him the Doctor of Literature in 1995 for his contribution to Bangla Literature.

In 1968, the Bangla Academy honoured Sharif with its Literary Award. Daud Literary Award went to him in 1969 and the *Ekushe Padak* in as late as 1991.

However, many believe that one of his major achievements was that he, unlike many of his contemporary scholars and academics, had been able to exact the hatred and enmity of reactionary forces by the bold expression of his own views.

The professor was also universally admired for his ability to say 'no' to various material temptations. Unfailingly, he upheld his sense of integrity and dignity all his life.

Uncompromising till death, Sharif rose above all religious and parochial outlooks towards life. For his brave utterances against communism and superstitions, autocracy and fascism, his life came under threat many times. He did not care.

Sharif influenced many youths, if not all who came across him. Young people used to pay regular visits to his residence, and took part in the weekly discussions on issues ranging from the ideal way of child rearing to modern theories of literature and philosophy. Many young people found Sharif younger than them during those debates and discussions.

Sharif will continue to live in other different ways, his life a scholarly contribution part.

Sandhani, a voluntary organisation that receives donation of eyes for the poor blinds, collected Sharif's eyes hours after he expired. His corneas went to two blind men - Hafez Khairul Alam Khokan from Madaripur and Sakir Hossain of Dhaka.

Sharif's body, now at the BIRDEN mortuary, will be kept at the central Shahid Minar for two hours from 3:30 pm Sunday for a last glimpse by his admirers. His body will then be handed over to the Bangladesh Medical College authorities for dissection and study by the students. This will be done in accordance with his last wishes.

Editor : Mahfuz Anam

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Iran gives Bangladesh land to promote trade, ties

Iran has given Bangladesh 2000 square metres of land as a gift in its prime Free Zone in Kish Island in the Persian Gulf, according to a message received here from Bangladesh embassy in Tehran.

The land has been given to Bangladesh by the Kish Free Zone Organisation for promotion of bilateral trade and economic ties.

It was handed over to Bangladeshi Ambassador to Iran Tufail K Haider by President of Kish Free Zone Organisation Yazdanpanah Fadaee at a simple ceremony in the island recently, the message said on Tuesday.

The land was given to Bangladesh as a result of the initiative and efforts taken by the ambassador.

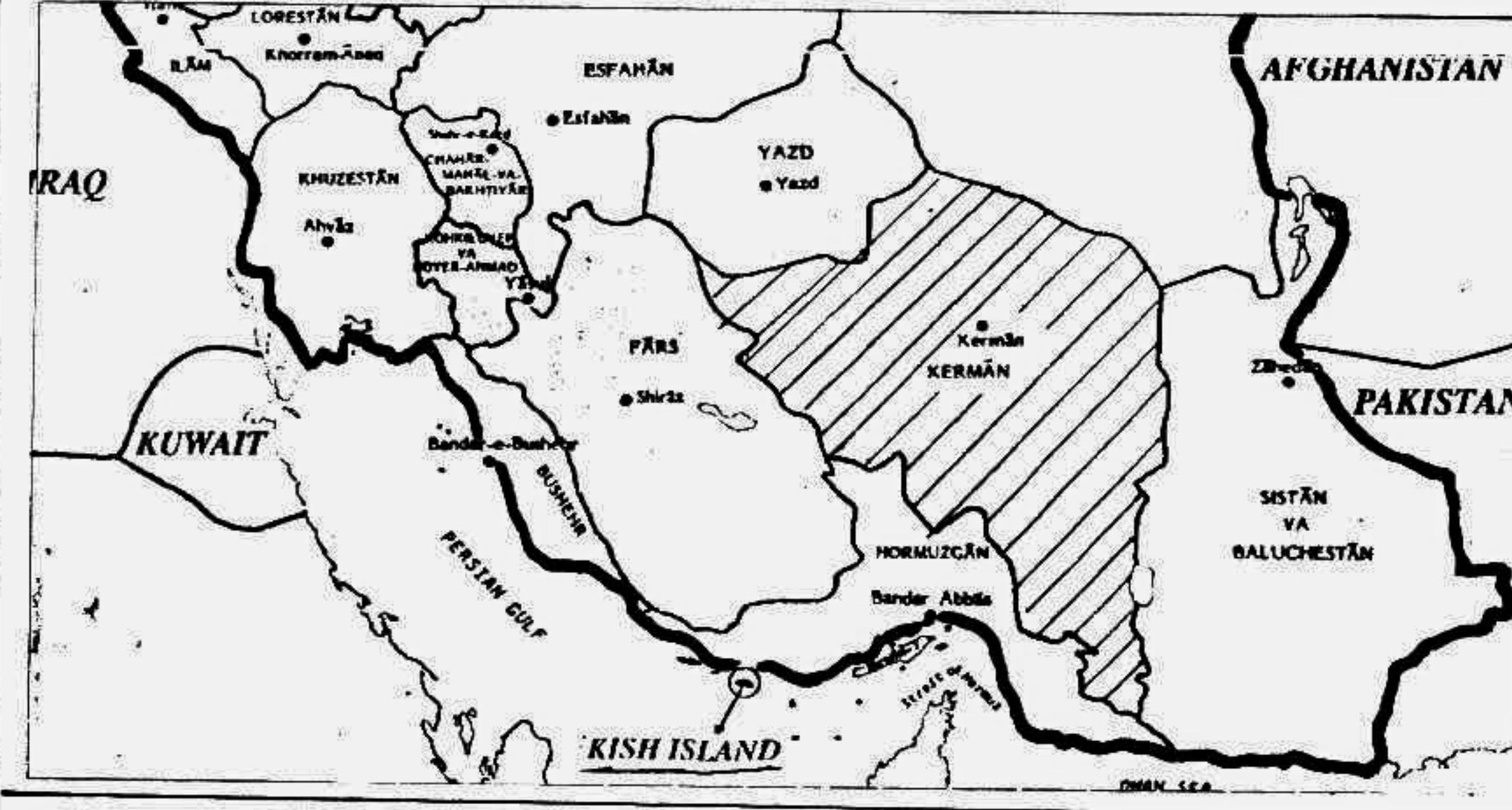
Bangladesh has been paired up as twins with the second

largest Iranian province of Kerman, which has also been given 2000 square metres of land next to the plot allotted to Bangladesh.

Kerman will set up commercial units, cultural and information centres and industrial projects. Likewise, Bangladesh may establish her own commercial economic and cultural centres and industrial units in the allotted land. This will be a partnership arrangement as twins between Bangladesh and Kerman in business, industry and tourism and culture.

Similar pairs between 10 other foreign countries and various provinces of Iran have already been selected. Bangladesh is a partner in the eleventh twinship.

To complete the process, a bill has been introduced in the Iranian Parliament to reform existing laws to ensure security to foreign investment, and setting up of foreign banks and insurance companies there.



AL won't use armed forces for political gains : Hasina

CHITTAGONG, Feb 24: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said here today that Awami League government would never use the armed forces for political gains and purposes, reports BSS.

"We want to keep the armed forces above all political debates as they symbolise the country's unity and sovereignty," she said while addressing the commanding officer of East Bengal Regiment at Chittagong Cantonment this morning.

She said false propaganda was carried out against Awami League with a purpose to malign our party. "We have proved that we want to develop the country with the active cooperation of all the citizens," she added.

She also addressed the officers and troops of the Bangladesh Army at a ceremonial parade marking the presentation of national standards to the "Durjy Chobhis" and "Mrittunjyo Pochish," two battalions of the East Bengal regiment at the Shaheed M R Chowdhury parade ground of the East Bengal Regimental Centre (EBRC) at Chittagong Cantonment this morning.

Earlier, she reviewed the smartly turned-out parade and took salute at the impressive march past on board an open jeep.

On arrival at the parade ground, the Prime Minister was received by Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Muhammad Mustafizur Rahman, the Chittagong Area Commander Major General Abu Kaiser Fazlul Kabir and EBRC Commandant Brigadier Rezaqul Haider.

Opposition blasts

From Page 1
lished news items, in which they showed big turn out of voters. As a result, credibility and people's confidence in those media sections are decreasing each day.

The BNP secretary general said in the past the usual turnout stood at 55 to 60 percent but the government and Election Commission have jointly claimed the turn out to be higher than that.

"How the turn out can be high? All opposition parties are boycotting the polls and non-stop hartal is going on. Under this situation, none but the foolish can claim that turn out of voters is higher (60 to 70 per cent) what is the normal," Bhuiyan said.

He said that no opposition members are contesting the election, but confirmed that a few local opposition leaders and activists who have already been expelled on charges of violation of party decision are.

He alleged that the Chief Election Commissioner has become an "agent" of the government. "He (CEC) is now speaking ahead of the general secretary of Awami League as it is the duty of him to speak more than the ruling party leaders," Bhuiyan observed.

Turning to the hartal, the BNP leader said last two days' hartal became a complete success as people from all walks of life observed the shut down. He hoped that people would continue to make the total 66-hour

Two stabbed

From Page 1

assailants entered the house of Nazir and stabbed his elder brother Anwar at about 3 am yesterday. When Nazir tried to resist the attackers, the gang dragged Nazir out of the house and stabbed him in the chest.

He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the attending doctors declared him dead at around 5 am.

In the other incident, a gang of about six led by a brother of Gani's divorced wife attacked him near a petrol pump in Amambazar area at around 8:30 pm on Tuesday, police said.

Two murder cases were filed with Savar thana in connection with the incidents yesterday.

50 municipalities

From Page 1

pur, Kalia, Mongla Port and Paikgacha of Khulna division; Barguna, Pirojpur, Bakerganj and Nalchiti of Barisal division; Tangail, Mymensingh, Durgapur, Bhairab, Natlabari, Narsingdi, Faridpur, Madaripur, Tongipara and Kotalipara of Dhaka division.

Chhatak, Madhabpur, Sri-mangal and Kulaura of Sylhet division, and Daudkandi, Hajiganj, Kochua, Raipur, Noakhali, Chakhtik, Patiya, Khagrachari and Rangamati of Chittagong division.

strike a complete success.

Replying to a question, Bhuiyan said the opposition parties have been enforcing the hartals in a peaceful manner, but the government in the name of resisting the hartals resorted to unabashed violence.

About sniper bomb attacks, he said the government party is itself doing the criminal activities to blame the opposition. "I want to make it very clear that we have no connection with bomb blasts," he added.

The BNP secretary general strongly condemned police action on photo journalists in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday afternoon and demanded exemplary punishment for those responsible for the attack.

JP presidium member Kazi Firoz Rashid said that politics has now become very risky and political leaders and workers are scared of terrorist acts being committed against them. "Due to the unbearable violence perpetrated by the government, we hesitate to request our workers to go for picketing. Both the police and AL terrorists are not allowing the opposition workers to take the roads and lanes," he said.

The Awami League leader Matin in his address said the consequence of ignorance of 80 per cent people's demand would bring danger for the government. The Awami League government is running the country as per the instruction of Delhi, he alleged.

The heads of state and government are due to arrive in the capital on February 28. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to receive them at Zia International Airport.

The heads of the delegations will have a joint call on President Shahabuddin Ahmed.

Besides, they will lay wreaths at the national mausoleum at Savar and visit the Bangabandhu Museum. The D-8 leaders will also have a river cruise on the Buriganga and the Meghna.

The opposition leaders demanded immediate and unconditional release of all arrested leaders and activists and halt of repression and oppression.

D-8 officials

From Page 1

Dr Taufiq Ali, who is the coordinating official for the summit, will preside over the meeting of the D-8 commission, the official-level body of the group.

The first summit of the block was held in Istanbul, Turkey, in June 1997. D-8 groups Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Nigeria, Indonesia and Malaysia.

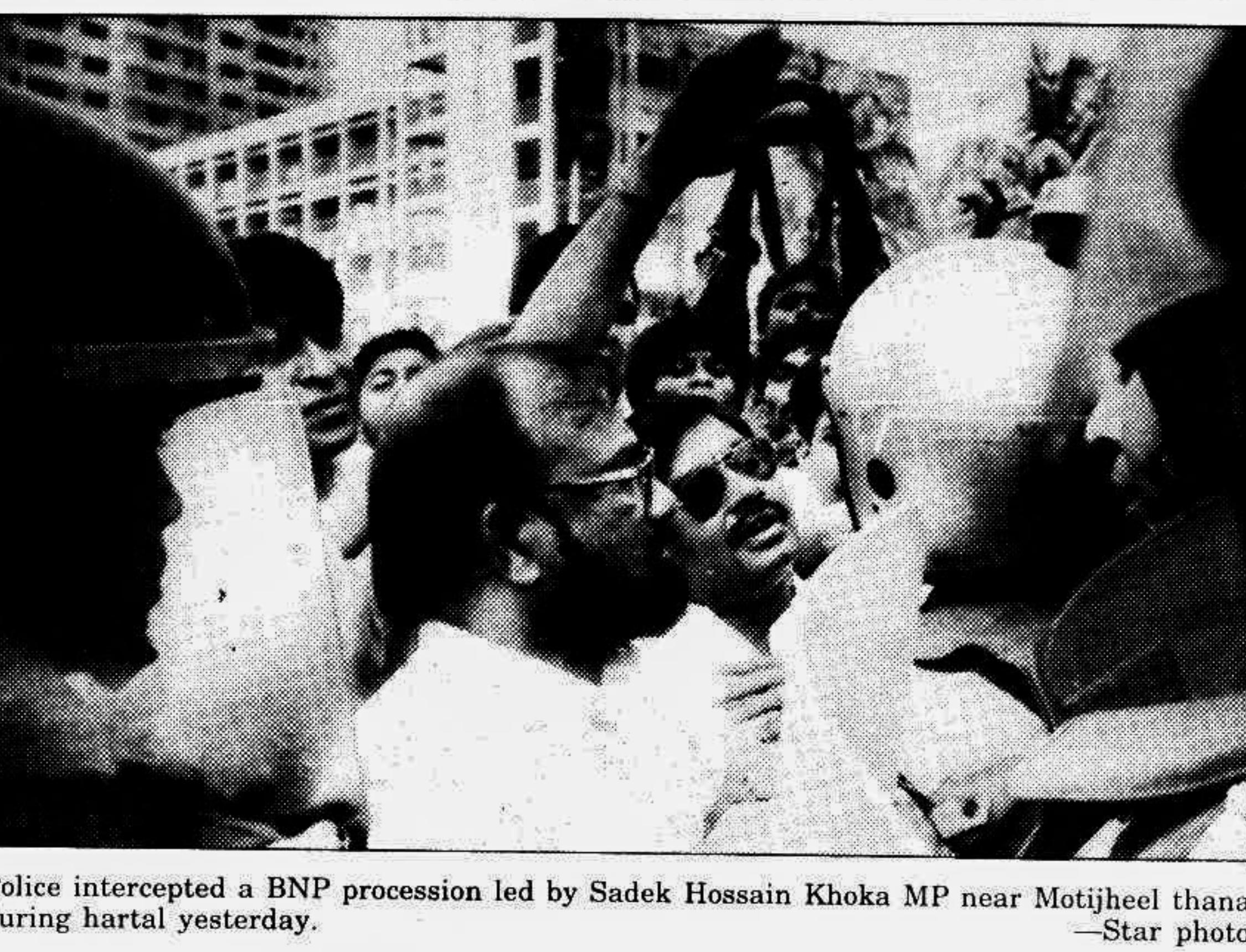
The commission meetings will be followed by a session of the Council of Ministers on Saturday to finalise the draft of the agenda.

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Police intercepted a BNP procession led by Sadek Hossain Khoka MP near Motijheel thana during hartal yesterday.

—Star photo

One killed during hartal

From Page 1

cluding Khuina and Mymensingh, hartal was observed partially.

Our Mymensingh correspondent reported that offices, both public and private, business establishments and educational institutions were open during hartal hours in many parts of the district yesterday.

In Narayanganj, the hartal call was largely ignored for the second day yesterday.

In capital Dhaka, police detained 73 people on charges of rioting.

Four political parties, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikya Jote enforced the shutdown to resist municipal polls, which they boycotted on the plea that the polls would not be fair and free under the incumbent Election Commission.

At least four on-duty press photographers were injured

when police used baton on them in front of the Jatiya Press Club at around 4:15pm.

It ensued when a rickshaw-puller was severely injured as some unidentified miscreants threw tear gas bombs in front of the Club where rickshaws were waiting.

Shukur Ali, 40, the rickshaw-puller, lost his right hand as a result of the bomb injuries. The amputation took place during an emergency operation at DMCH in the evening.

Police stopped a minibus following the incident and resorted to indiscriminate baton charge after the explosion. The bus soon turned on lensmen trying to take snaps of the events. Despite repeated requests from the crowd to conduct a search inside the minibus, police allowed it to leave the place.

The injured press photographers included Amran Hossain of The Daily Star, Hasanuzzaman Tarun of the Manab Zammin, and Mamun Abedin and Saiful Islam of the Bhoror Kagoj.

A clash erupted in city's Maghbazar area last night between Jamaat activists and slum dwellers near the rail track. The slum people threw brickbats at the central office of Jamaat immediately after a tempo was set on fire by pro-hartal elements near Century Arcade shopping mall.

Police lobbed teargas shells to quell the one-hour fight.

A teenager, Khokon, received injuries when a bomb exploded in his hand at Bijoynagar early afternoon.

At least 10 people were injured in running battles between activists of pro- and anti-strikers at Shahed Faruk Road near Jatrabari crossing. Two, identified as Saiful and Jahangir, were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with bomb injuries.

They exploded hand bombs off and on in the sprawling neighbourhood