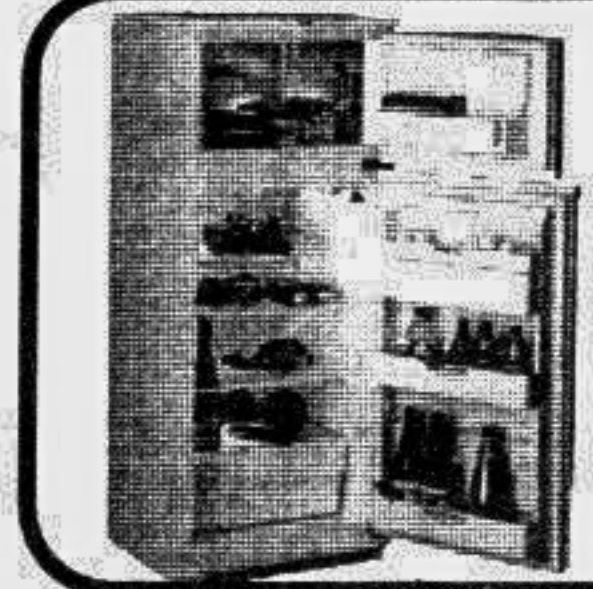


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Down to Earth

Odd Ways in Quest of Subsistence

By A S M Nurunnabi

As an individual is endowed with a variety of traits, none of which exactly matches those of others, so also there is a kaleidoscopic range of pursuits by which a large number of people poised on the borderline of survival and extinction earn their precarious living to keep their body and soul together. This may be treated as a philosophic reflection on the infinite variety of nature's creation which we sometimes pause to ponder. But on many occasions, the cruel reality of some situations leaves a significant impact on our conscience and creates feelings of irrevocable dispensation.

In this context, some odd ways in quest of subsistence may be noted. There is the queer occupation of selling ashes followed by some wretched women particularly in some areas of Dhaka city where domestic gas is mostly in use. Two decades ago, few people would think that ashes could command a price for their use in cleaning utensils and crockeries mostly for people below a certain stratum of society. Those were days when domestic gas didn't come into common use.

Housewives mostly used to depend on ashes derived from burnt fuel in their kitchens for cleaning purposes. The whole picture changes with the rapid expansion of gas network for domestic use. Those who are financially better off have their detergents and washing powders, but those who cannot afford them have no alternative but to depend on the rattleable women who sell their wares of ashes. The bags of ashes they carry on their heads tend to lend a grotesque image to their already wretched appearance.

Most people in the city look for easy ways because of the

modern constraints on time and energy. When such people go to any big market in the city to buy live fowls, they often want to avoid the grisly act of killing and properly dressing them at home. For such an unpleasant job, a class of mini butchers, most of them young boys, are readily available around. You give them a small amount of money, and they with the help of some older boys prove efficient in the quick dressing of the chickens you buy and you carry home the load of dressed chickens with the least bother.

In every season, particularly with the advent of winter, many trees in the Suhrawardy Udyan shed their dry leaves. Could anyone think that the volume of shed dry leaves in the garden can be a source of living for some poor souls. This actually happens every season when small groups of women and minor girls remain engaged in collecting twigs.

If you watch work of the collectors for a few hours, you will find that they are able to pile up heaps of dry leaves enough to fill up some large-sized gunny bags in no time.

On account of their easy use as fuel, these dry leaves find ready buyers in slum areas. The value obtained from their sale may be a pittance, but since all the members of a family including children remain engaged in the occupation of collection, the output may be quite a few bags of dry leaves, bringing not a negligible sale proceed.

There are some aspects of the work of the collectors which may strike a sympathetic chord in your heart. As they sweep dry leaves from the ground, dust is also raised which cover their countenance, giving them a ghostly appearance.

In our urban life we find increasing appreciation of flowers. The wide appreciation of flowers forms a new staple of business in the hands of some nondescript youngsters. They can be seen at almost all important road junctions, particularly when shoppers go to board their cars at the end of shopping or when the rickshaws we travel in get stalled at road crossings in a traffic jam or in busy shopping areas. Besides loose stalks of *Rajani Gandha* and small collections of roses, these youngsters sell small garlands of *Bakul* or *Sheuti* flowers in their seasons. All these are offered to customers at any price they choose to pay. Along with flowers these youngsters also sell newspapers and an assortment of candies when all vehicular traffic comes to halt to allow other vehicles from other direction to pass at busy road intersections.

This may be treated as a sublimated form of begging which is resorted to by an increasing number of poor boys and girls. Another species of juveniles trying to earn a living by the sweat of their young brows are groups of young vendors who sell ready tea in city parks. Their trade is currently facilitated by the use of large-sized thermos flasks which cater to the needs of more customers. The need of customers for a satisfying hot drink is readily supplemented by other groups of youngsters selling potato chips and peanuts. While the elders take their hot drinks, the children accompanying them can be kept satisfied by offers of candies which are also supplied by other juvenile vendors in the parks.

Thus the mosaic of economic life at the bottom of social ladder presents a depressing picture.

Khaleda plotting to stage another '75: Zillur

As the opposition is getting ready for enforcing a country-wide shutdown tomorrow, the general secretary of the ruling Awami League warned that it would not be allowed to create anarchy in the name of hartal, reports UNB.

"By no means will they be allowed to create disorder in public life and stage illogical movement," Zillur Rahman said at a public meeting organised by Hossainpur Thana Awami League in Kishoreganj district yesterday.

The BNP-led opposition alliance has called a dawn-to-dusk general strike for Sunday in protest against killing in Narayanaganj during a protest against a government decision regarding awarding transhipment facility to India.

Zillur Rahman, the LGRD minister, said after the brutal

killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with his family members on August 15 in 1975, "anti-liberation reactionary forces" had played with the fate of the people, holding back national development and progress in last 21 years.

He squarely blamed BNP chairperson and leader of the opposition Khaleda Zia for what he said leading a cohort of anti-liberation forces and plotting to stage another August 75.

Dismissing the opposition leader's allegations relating to transit and other issues as "false propaganda," he asked the opposition to consider transhipment in economic and commercial perspectives rather than using it as a political weapon for anti-government movement.

Interference in judiciary

From page 1
carry out repression on news-men to implement its evil designs, commit misdeeds and corruption, and sell out national interests.

The press needs unhindered freedom for the sake of flourishing of democracy. The press must have to be allowed to enjoy full and unrestricted freedom. A society cannot advance without freedom of the press and the newsmen," she said.

In her 19-minute speech, Khaleda blasted the government for selling the country's interests to India. She said since its assumption to power the government is only fulfilling the commitments it gave to its masters in India.

Signing of the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty, the "so-called" CHT Peace Agreement and attempt to provide corridor facility to India are among the commitments it gave to India before the last general election, she added.

"After the transit, the government will hand over the Chittagong port and give gas to India," she observed.

She also alleged that the government is nakedly cooperating with India to establish New Delhi's hegemony and turn Bangladesh into a market of India. It is doing so because their (AL) Indian masters brought them to power by stealing vote.

On the squatter eviction drive, the opposition leader said no slum dweller can be evicted from any where in the

city without arranging proper rehabilitation for them. She also asked the government not to acquire any land illegally. She called upon the people to remain alert against illegal acquisition and occupying of lands and houses by the ruling party members.

BNP will not say anything if terrorists are found in the slums and punished. "But in fact terrorists do not live in slum... terrorists live in the houses of Awami League leaders and ministers. The terrorists are letting loose terrorism and killing opposition activists and innocent people staying in their (leaders and ministers) houses," she added.

The opposition leader said the ruling party members will have to face trial in future for their misdeeds, corruption, looting, anti-people activities and grabbing of people's wealth and property. "Inshaallah, they will be tried in the soil of Bangladesh," she added.

Presided over by local BNP leader Major (Retd) Kamrul Islam, the meeting was addressed, among others, by M Saifur Rahman MP, M Anwar MP, Sadek Hossain Khoka MP, Col (Retd) Akbar Hossain MP, Kurshid Jahan Haq MP, Lt Gen (Retd) Mir Shawkat Ali, Major Gen (Retd) ZA Khan, former defence secretary MA Hakim, Mirza Abbas, Major (Retd) Hafizuddin Ahmed MP, Ltufar Rahman, Khan Azad MP, Amanullah Khan MP, Barkatullah Bhulu MP and Joyal Abedin Faruq, Abdus Salam and others.

Siddique takes oath as US ambassador

By Staff Correspondent

The first Bangladeshi-American to be appointed US ambassador was sworn in on Tuesday in Washington, DC.

M Osman Siddique is the first South Asian expatriate and first Muslim to be appointed US ambassador. He will serve as US envoy to the Republic of Fiji with concurrent accreditation to the Republic of Nauru, Kingdom of Tonga and to Tuvalu.

US reports from Washington that the Dhaka-born Siddique took his oath on both the Quran and the Bible, with the holy Quran placed on the top.

Recalling his arrival in the United States in 1971 "with no money", Siddique, 49 spoke of how he worked his way through Indiana University, doing odd jobs to finally become a travel agent and then open his own travel agency and finally ITI/Travelogue Inc based in Arlington, Virginia, which is today one of the leaders of the travel business on the Internet.

The ceremony was attended by his wife Catherine Mary, their four children Omar, Ju-lene, Leila and Zachary, several relatives, diplomats and State Department officials.

Siddique's appointment was hailed by the American Muslim Council (AMC), one of several organisations that represent the nearly six million Muslims who make up just over two percent of the total US population. Muslims are the third largest religious community after Christians and Jews and numerous polls have found that the Islam is the fastest growing religion in the US, reports IANS.

Osman Siddique, son of late Dr M O Ghani was a major contributor to the Democratic Party and served in several presidential delegations.

Ambassador Siddique was twice named as a finalist for Inc Magazine's Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

Tremor rocks Costa Rica

SAN JOSE, Aug 20: A strong earthquake measuring up to 6.7 on the Richter scale rocked Costa Rica early today, shaking buildings, cutting power and frightening people out of sleep but causing no serious damage or injuries, officials said, reports Reuters.

The quake struck at 4:02 am (1002 GMT) with its epicentre (88-km south of the capital San Jose and near the Pacific Coast national park Manuel Antonio, according to the US Geological Survey based in Golden, Colo.

However, Costa Rica's Seismological Service recorded the magnitude at 5.5 on Richter scale, enough to cause considerable to severe damage, and reported the epicentre 47-km off the coast, or 220-km from San Jose.



BNP brought out a mourning procession in the city yesterday after holding a gayebana janaza for one of its activists who was killed at Narayanaganj on Wednesday.— Star photo

CAAB cancels tender for cooler Completion of arrival lounge at ZIA delayed further

By Special Correspondent

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) has cancelled the procedure for tender to procure air-conditioning system for the new arrival lounge of the Zia International Airport three days before opening of the bid reportedly at the insistence of higher authorities.

The sudden cancellation has been ordered following persuasion by a lobby enjoying blessings of high-ups in the civil aviation ministry, concerned sources said.

The decision would delay the completion of the arrival lounge, already behind schedule, further adding to a cost overrun, estimated to be nearly Tk 60 crore instead of Tk 35 and half crore as projected, originally, in 1994-95 fiscal.

Trouble followed a decision by a technical evaluation committee of the CAAB to opt for a compressor type chiller instead of a vapour absorption type, used for recycling heat for industrial purposes, which would cost more.

Only one airport in South Korea (not the main airport in Seoul) uses such a system, the

sources said. The technical committee had a consultant, a professor from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), who went through the normal procedures to evaluate the need for the ZIA, considering the future expansion as well as to select a cooling system.

But influential reportedly having ties with high-ups in the civil aviation ministry have been lobbying for the vapour absorption type. They have prevailed over the policy makers, insisting on sale of the system from a single supplier originating in India, the sources said.

The system would cost about Tk 13 crore against Tk 9 crore of the compressor type chiller, originating from Japan or other far-eastern or even western sources, the sources said.

After cancelling the tender process they are poised to arm twist the technical committee to change its decision.

There would be fresh tenders again, the sources said. No explanation was given in the order cancelling the tender process, they added.

29 police officers return home from Kosovo

Twenty-nine police officers returned home early yesterday from Kosovo, official sources said, reports BSS.

The officers, "disqualified" in tests carried out in Pristina by the police commander there, were brought back home by an aircraft chartered by the United Nations.

A total of 49 police officers were sent late last month in response to an emergency appeal from the UN for policing peace in Kosovo.

In the test only 13 officers were qualified. Another test was taken following a request from Bangladesh in which six out of 36 officers came out successful.

Immigration sources at the Zia International Airport said one police officer stayed back for personal reason and will return later.

Meanwhile, 11 on-duty Bangladesh police officers in Bosnia were sent to Kosovo to help maintain peace there.

About 100 police officers are now involved in UN peacekeeping operations in different parts of the world, sources in the foreign ministry said.

The police officers sent to Kosovo were selected from among 170 who took part in written and viva voce examinations. Of them, 36 have previous experiences of serving with UN peace missions.

Plane carrying aid for quake victims crashes

ISTANBUL, Aug 20: A small plane carrying aid to the victims of Turkey's earthquake crashed in the sea off Istanbul today while attempting an emergency landing at the city's airport, reports AP.

Police boats raced to the crash site and rescued the injured pilot, the Anatolia news agency reported. It was not immediately clear if there was anyone else on board the Cessna C-172 and there was no immediate information on the type of aid it carried.

According to Anatolia, the pilot said he was flying aid to the city of Izmit.

The plane crashed about 100 meters (330 feet) away from a marina.

Shocked

From page 1
Hasina has also expressed her deep shock at the death of BNP leader and former minister Barrister Abdus Salam Talukdar.

In a separate condolence message yesterday, she said with the death of Barrister Salam Talukdar the country has lost a veteran political leader. She mentioned the significant contribution of the late leader to the politics of Bangladesh.

The Prime Minister conveyed her sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for the salvation of the departed soul.

4 muggers

From page 1
police personnel from the police lines chased the muggers. The arrested were under custody at Motijheel thana till filing of this report. A case was filed with Motijheel thana yesterday.

Nasim

From page 1
Pourashabha the reception meeting was attended by at least 5,000 people. In reply to the local demands raised by speakers at the reception, Nasim assured that Pabna would be the first district in North Bengal to get gas after the supply reached Baghabari via Bangabandhu Multipurpose Jamuna Bridge. He also assured a 7000-line digital telephone facility for Pabna. The construction in this regard would be started this year under Chinese cooperation, he said.

Russian jets hit rebel targets in Chechnya

MAKHACHKALA (Russia), Aug 20: Russian war planes today hit Islamic rebel units inside breakaway Chechnya, while also raiding villages held by the militants in neighbouring Dagestan, the Defence Ministry said, reports AP.

The airstrikes on two villages inside Chechnya were a rare case of Russian forces attacking in the rebellious territory, and it raised the prospect of widening the 14-day-old conflict.

Russia's Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has said the military will go after rebels who are in Chechnya, but Moscow has refrained from ground operations in the republic so far.

Putin said today that the situation around Chechnya, where Russia suffered a humiliating defeat during the 1994-96 war with the separatists, should be resolved by political means.

"But if we encounter challenges from international terrorist formations, we shall answer them for the sake of Russia's security," Putin said.

Chechnya, which has been running its own affairs since 1996, has declared a state of emergency in response to Russia's threats. Hundreds of Chechen reservists were digging trenches today along the Dagestan border, a Chechen defense official said, according to the Interfax news agency.

The raids around the Chechen villages of Kenkhi and Beni targeted rebel units that numbered 400 to 500 fighters and apparently were planning to cross into Dagestan, said a Defense Ministry spokesman.

Also today, four Russian police officers were wounded in new clashes with the rebels, and several militants were killed, Russia's Interior Ministry said. (Earlier story on page 5)

Ershad threatens to boycott JS session

Jatiya Party Chairperson HM Ershad has threatened to boycott parliament session if the government does not withdraw its decision to provide transhipment facility to India, reports UNB.

"If the government does not rescind its decision, we will have to think whether we will attend the parliament session or not," he told a press conference at party office yesterday afternoon.

Ershad called upon the government to place the issue in the House.

In fact, he said, the government is out to allow India to use Bangladesh as corridor. He said India wants corridor to ferry its goods because different groups fighting for independence in different Indian states are hindering smooth transportation of goods.

"I said an agreement was signed during Bangabandhu's regime to provide transit to India.

The government intends to implement that agreement, Ershad said adding, "Probably there is some ill-motive behind it."

On SAPTA agreement, he said, it was a multilateral agreement and as per the agreement all the seven member countries can use other's land for transit purpose, but India did not allow Bangladesh to ferry goods to Nepal through its territory.

Criticising all agreements signed during the last three years, including Ganges water treaty and CHT peace agreement, he said "we will not allow one-sided agreement allowing India to ferry its goods using Bangladesh as its corridor."

He feared that if India is allowed to tranship its goods then arms and drugs will pour into Bangladesh.

In reply to a query, Ershad said liaison committee will decide parliament boycott issue, but Jatiya Party thinks that opposition should not attend the session if the cabinet decision on transhipment is not withdrawn.

Criticising the government for imposing restriction on JP meeting at Kaliganj yesterday, he said "it is very significant."

"Yes, the previous BNP government did not allow the Jatiya Party to hold meetings, but pardon restriction on my meeting by the present government in recent times is very significant."

Pointing to the present state of BNP MPs, Dr Md Alauddin and Hasibur Rahman Swapan, the JP chief said his party is also taking preparation to take such move against Anwar Hossain Manju.

About slum eviction, he said slums were demolished during his tenure but it was done only after rehabilitating the slum dwellers at Ershadnagar in Tongi.

Salam Talukdar dead

From page 1

Talukdar joined the BNP in 1978 when the party was founded by late President Ziaur Rahman. He was elected MP for the first time from Sarishabari in 1979. He was made State Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs in President Sattar's cabinet. He participated actively in the anti-awami movement. He was again elected MP in 1991. Besides being party secretary general he was given charge of the LGRD and Cooperatives Ministry, and continued in both positions till the end of BNP's tenure under Khaleda Zia in June 1996.

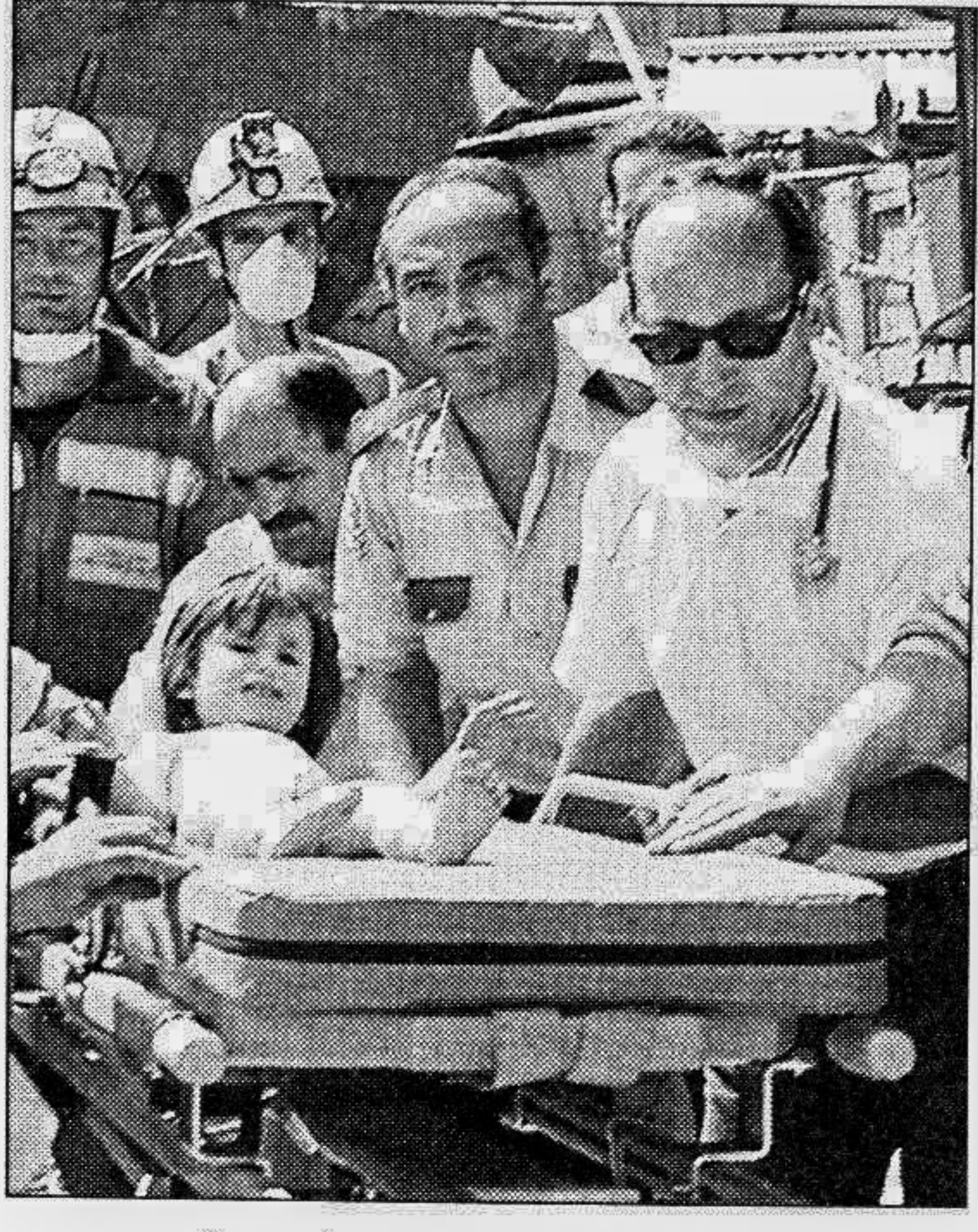
The BNP has declared a five-day mourning for the veteran BNP leader. Party flag in central office and all other offices will be flown at half mast and black flags will also be hoisted. BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and scores of people, politicians, friends and relatives rushed to his DOHS residence to have a glimpse of the late leader.

Meanwhile, Khaleda Zia has expressed profound shock at the death of party Standing Committee member Abdus Salam Talukdar. In a message of condolence yesterday, she said at his death the nation lost a devoted political personality while BNP lost a dedicated leader. "This gap can never be filled up. He was a patriotic and nationalist leader and worked relentlessly at the days of joy and distress of the BNP. He played an outstanding role for both flourishing and winning the party in different capacity, including as secretary general," Khaleda added.

She prayed for the salvation of the departed soul and conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family members. In a separate message, secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan also expressed deep shock at the death of Salam Talukdar.

Bhuiyan said the death of Salam Talukdar is an irreparable loss to the country, nation and BNP. Late Talukdar played an outstanding role for politics, democracy and the party, he added.

Meanwhile, the BNP has postponed its public meeting scheduled for today at Madhubagh in Maghbaraz due to the death of Salam Talukdar. Fresh date will be announced later, said a press release.



Hungarian rescuers carry on a stretcher a girl they saved from the wreck of a building in Izmit yesterday. The death toll in the devastating earthquake that struck Turkey Tuesday could go as high as 40,000 people, UN officials feared. — AFP photo

35000 still buried

From page 1
GMT). No damage was reported. Earlier panicked Istanbul residents grabbed food and bed sheets and ran into the streets after Turkey's top seismologist warned that another earthquake could follow Tuesday's devastating tremor.

Police driving through Istanbul used car loudspeakers to urge residents to spend another night outside following Thursday's report from the city's Kandilli Observatory that it had recorded some 210 aftershocks within three hours Thursday evening.

Later, the chief of the observatory said he had revised his forecast and no longer believed that there would be a second quake this week. Turkey has mobilized 50,000 soldiers to help in the rescue

efforts and aid poured in from across the world. Some 2,000 foreign rescuers in the quake zone headed out with sniffer dogs and high-tech gear to resume the search for survivors today.

There are still reports of people hearing voices in the rubble," said Steve Catlin, rescue coordinator with the US Agency for International Development's foreign disaster assistance office. "This gives us pause for future hope."

A UN spokesman in New York, Manoel de Almeida e Silva, told reporters that some 35,000 people could be still buried under debris.

But Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit admitted what many people feared when he said that "thousands of buildings are in ruins. It is not possible to reach all of them."