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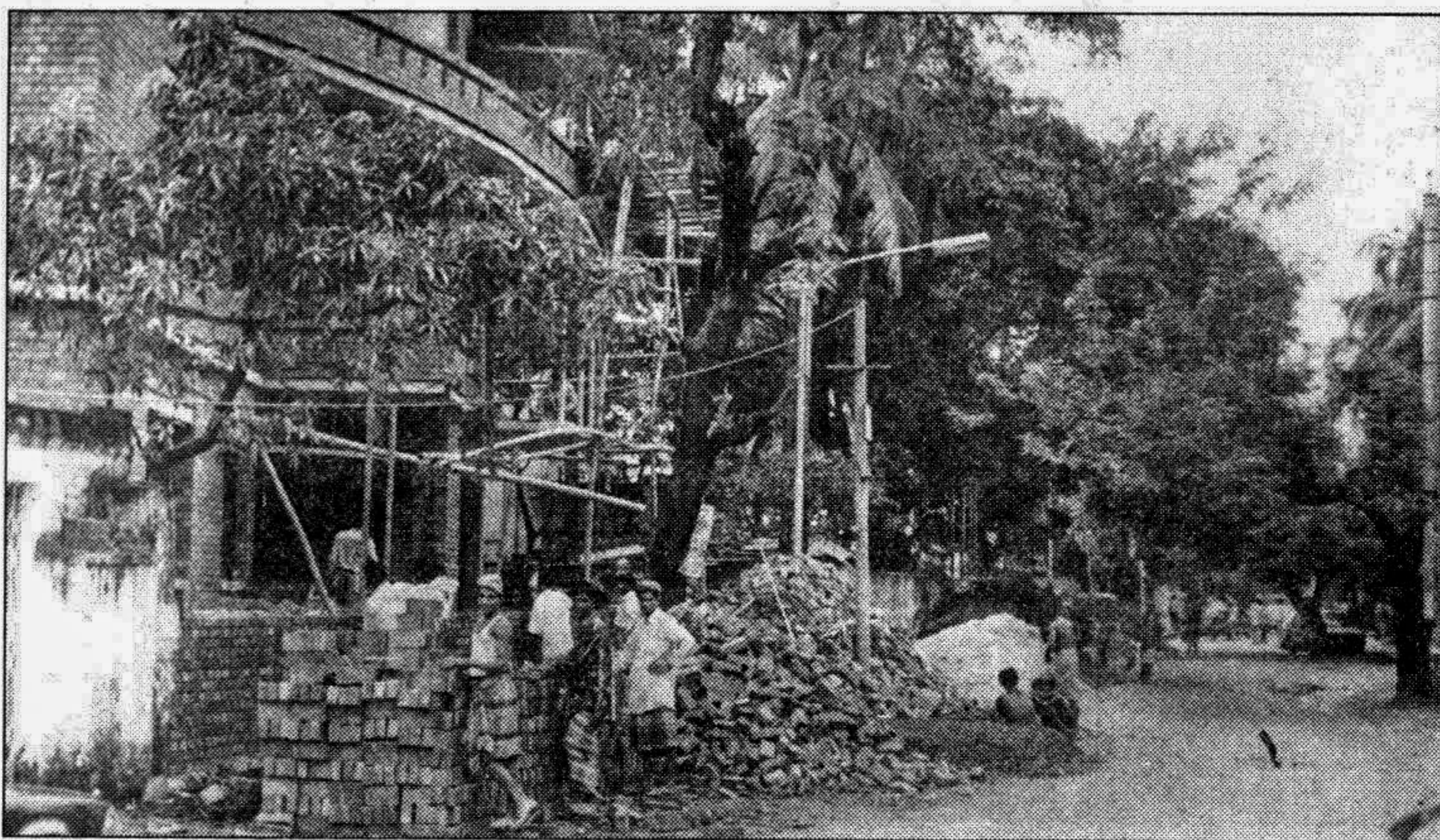

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Aggression
A Dhanmondi resident defies law and others' rights, occupying half of the 15-foot road with construction material. But who cares?
— Star photo by Anisur Rahman

New taxes: Sharif faces series of protests

ISLAMABAD, Sept 1: Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif faces the first of a series of major protests today by traders angry at new taxes and opposition parties united in their determination to force him to step down, reports Reuters.

The demonstrations, which bring together headline Islamic parties and traditional opposition groups, begin in Sharif's home town of Lahore this evening and are planned as the biggest since he was elected in 1997.

Sharif has played down the significance of the demonstrations, saying protests cannot reverse the huge majority he won in February 1997 elections.

"They won't harm the government," he told a Tuesday rally.

But behind-the-scenes at-

tempts to defuse the protests reveal government concern that they could snowball as it administers tough economic medicine prescribed by the IMF despite pledges the "common man" will not be taxed further, political sources said.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar tried in vain on Tuesday to head off a traders protest set for September 4 across Pakistan that has support of major opposition political parties.

The Lahore protest today is the first of three demonstrations which culminate with a rally by the Jamaat-i-Islami, Islamic opposition group of Qazi Hussain Ahmad next Monday.

mir's Kargil heights in July under world pressure to head off a fourth Indo-Pakistani war.

The target of the traders' protest is the imposition of a 15 per cent General Sales Tax (GST) at retail level, a demand of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which small traders say will ruin them. "The method that is being adopted to raise the taxes has a wrong direction which is keeping the taxpayers away from the system," said Tariq Sayed, former president of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

"So everybody is disturbed... exporters are disturbed, industry is disturbed, importers are disturbed so if all the sectors of the economy are disturbed how can the economy improve? It's beyond my imagination," he said.

Official notices, appeals fall on deaf ears

By Staff Correspondent

A developer in Dhanmondi has encroached upon more than half of a busy thoroughfare ignoring official notices and repeated appeals from neighbours.

The construction materials of plot No 12 of Road-12 (old numbers: Plot 692, Road 31), have been dumped on the street for the last four months creating a traffic mayhem in the area that houses seven large schools. The road is about 15 feet wide and during school hours it is choked with traffic.

Police requests from parents, teachers, neighbours and Dhanmondi police have all fell on deaf ears of the developer, Munirul Hasan. A spot visit revealed that the plot has enough space inside its boundary for the materials, which are now lying on the street.

When contacted Munirul Hasan said he was aware of the problem and that he would remove the materials from the pavement and the road very shortly.

East Timor Gunshots near UN HQs: One killed

DILI, East Timor, Sept 1: Pro-Indonesia militiamen, unchecked by Indonesian troops in the tense aftermath to this week's independence ballot in East Timor, today fired gunshots near the UN headquarters in Dili, reports Reuters.

Witnesses said, at least one person was killed in the clash which follows Monday's United Nations-organised ballot, expected to give a landslide victory for independence in the bloodied former Portuguese territory.

BSP condemns

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Present at the meeting were, Mizanur Rahman, Mizan (Dainik Khabar), Alhaj Liakat Ali (Dainik Purbanchal), Mohammad Atiq Ullah Khan Masud (Dainik Janakantha), Aman Ullah Khan (Dhaka Courier), Mahfuz Anam (The Daily Star), Mustafizur Rahman, MP, (Dainik Rupali), Mohammad Zakaria Khan (Bangladesh Patrika), Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury (The Bangladesh Observer), Altamash Kabir (Sangbad), M Wahid Ullah (Dainik Azadi), Khalid Hossain (Dainik Shyambazar), Abul Khair (Dainik Aker Awaj), Suranjana Das (Dainik Matribhumi), and Mohammad Khalilur Rahman (Dainik Muk-takantha).

Indefinite transport strike in Sirajganj

From Our Correspondent SIRAJGANJ, Sept 1: The road communications were disrupted in the district when transport workers began an indefinite strike this morning after a clash between bus passengers and the driver.

The transport strike was enforced in Sirajganj-Belkuchi and Sirajganj-Bhayetpur routes. Five people, including the bus driver were injured in the clash at Mukunddarje.

People won't accept poll victory using money: President

President Shahabuddin Ahmed has said the country needs dedicated patriots and personalities with moral character for democracy to flourish, reports UNB.

"It's easy to win election using manpower and money but the practice is not good for democracy as people don't accept such election," he said at a seminar marking the 81st birth anniversary of Bangabir MAG Osmany.

Bangabir Osmany Smriti Parishad organised the seminar on the "Leadership role in building national character and searching for economic emancipation" at Osmany auditorium in the city yesterday. Parishad president Syed Abul Hossain Khwaja presided.

Paying rich tributes to the memory of Osmany, the President recalled his life and works and said he (Osmany) believed that leadership with strong moral character is needed for establishing democracy.

Osmany believed that government's accountability to the people lies in parliamentary system, not in the presidential one, the President said.

He said Osmany demonstrated his belief by resigning from parliament when one-party rule bill was placed in

'Food-aided programmes must produce lasting assets'

By Staff Correspondent

With dramatic change in global food aid portfolio, Bangladesh needs to utilise all its food-aided programmes for sustainable development of 30-million ultra poor in the country.

Dr Werner Kiene, country representative of the World Food Programme (WFP) to Bangladesh, said this while giving a talk on 'Food Security of Bangladesh and World Food Programme' at Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) in the

city yesterday. "Against an average availability of 15 million tonnes of food aid in the world less than a decade back, the volume has reduced to a mere four to five million tonnes now," Kiene said.

Chairman of the BISS, Maj Gen. Mustafa Kamaluddin and its director general Brig. Muhammad Shahedul Anam Khan also spoke briefly.

Saying that 30 million or nearly one fourth of Bangladesh population live in extreme poverty, Kiene told the gathering that programmes of both the governmental and non-governmental organisations should cover this ultra poor section, most of whom live in rural areas.

He noted that ultra poor people are compelled to reduce their food intake, which is below 1800 kilo calorie per person a day. They also have to reduce

expenses on education, sell out their last remaining assets and even sell their labour in advance. Sometimes they are forced to lend money from informal sources with high interest rate, Kiene added.

Explaining the WFP's role in Bangladesh, Kiene said that food-aided programmes must produce lasting assets and develop skills among the economically vulnerable section of the people for the sake of food security in the long run.

Instead of mere availability of food in the country, Kiene laid more emphasis on ensuring access to nutritious food by the ultra poor.

Referring to two million tonnes of food gap that exists in Bangladesh, Kiene said there remained a huge potential of augmenting aggregate agricultural production in the country.

Indian FM says Bangladesh not encouraging ISI activities

NEW DELHI, Sept 1: India's External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh yesterday gave a clean chit to Bangladesh, absolving it from the charge of abetting insurgency in north-eastern region of India through the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan, reports BSS.

"Bangladesh is not encouraging ISI activities against India, such activities may be taking place clandestinely on the soil of Bangladesh," he told newsmen at a meeting with the press at Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) headquarters here.

Singh said New Delhi had effectively and timely taken up the issue with Dhaka.

The minister said China was also not extending any help to the insurgency groups and ISI activities in Assam.

Replying to a question, he said Sino-India talks at experts group level would take place in October this year, as agreed to during his visit to Beijing.

Singh hinted that he might meet Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz during the UN General Assembly session in New York, but insisted that an end to cross-border terrorism was an essential ingredient for meaningful talks with Islamabad.

Promod Mahajan does it again

NEW DELHI, Sept 1: Indian Information Minister Promod Mahajan has again courted controversy ahead of coming elections, comparing a political rival with the much-married Elizabeth Taylor, the Hindu daily said today, reports AFP.

Mahajan, who had to apologise for remarks likening opposition leader Sonia Gandhi with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky, has attacked Sharad Pawar, a leading politician from the western state of Maharashtra.

"Pawar changed parties as often as Ms Taylor changed husbands," the newspaper quoted Mahajan as saying.

Pawar, a former stalwart in the main opposition Congress Party, floated his own party this year after raising the banner of revolt against the Italian-born Gandhi.

A spokesman for Mahajan's Hindu nationalist BJP Party Prakash Jawadekar told the Hindu that the minister's remarks were aimed at "educating the masses on the realities about political leaders."

69 killed
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cer who was on the ground lost a leg, the news agency Diarasy y Noticias reported.

The plane, which was headed to Cordoba, 650 kilometres (475 miles) northwest of the capital, lost contact with the air tower a minute into the flight, LAPA spokesman Ricardo Wilson said.

Meanwhile, UCBL activities appear to have returned to normal.



Crime and punishment

(Top) Vandals spewed venom in the flower shops at city's Shahbagh crossing, (above left) but were paid off in their own coin yesterday. Witnesses said a gang of eight appeared at 9am to demand money and, when refused, damaged 10 outlets. The flower traders responded angrily to the vandalism, beating up some of the culprits mercilessly. At least two of them were handed over to police (above right). But Ramna police later denied having detained anyone and said no body lodged any complaint.

— Star photos by Sk Enamul Haq

Cong alleges 'Sugargate' scam to pin down BJP-led alliance

From Pallab Bhattacharya

NEW DELHI, Sept 1: Seeking to set its own agenda for the coming general elections and pin down the ruling BJP-led alliance, India's main opposition Congress has accused the Prime Minister's office of involvement in a deal to import sugar from Pakistan causing a "loss" of Rs 900 crore in foreign exchange to the national exchequer.

Releasing details of what Congress termed it as "Sugargate," the party spokesman Kapil Sibal said the import was signed between "Pakistan Inter-Services Intelligence-controlled Army Welfare Trust" and a Delhi-based Mill for import of 80,000 tonnes of sugar in last February.

Sibal claimed the profits earned by the Trust from the deal were invested by Pakistan government in arms which were "used against us during the Kargil conflict."

The Congress said Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's family has a major share in eight of the 15 sugar mills in

that country.

The main opposition party alleged the deal was clinched when there was a sugar glut in Indian market and that the Food Ministry's "objections" were overruled by the Prime Minister's office.

The Indian government, on the other hand, termed as "ridiculous" the Congress charge of loss of Rs 900 crore to the exchequer due to sugar import from Pakistan and brushed aside the allegation of involvement of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

An official spokesman said the imports were made exclusively by private parties under Open General Licence enforced in 1994 and the government had no role in the imports.

The spokesman said in a statement that taking into consideration the fact that Indian sugar industry was "facing difficulty" in meeting the situation arising out of the sugar import, the present government levied import duty initially at five per

cent which was later increased to 20 per cent and 25 per cent.

Due to these steps, the domestic sugar industry was now "better equipped" to face competition from overseas.

Political observers here say the Congress, by raising the "Sugargate" issue, is seeking to break out of the BJP-led alliance polls planks focusing on top opposition leader Sonia Gandhi's foreign origin issue and Vajpayee government's "success" on the Kargil standoff with Pakistan.

In fact, a day after Kapil Sibal broached the subject of sugar import deal with Pakistan, Congress chief, Sonia Gandhi, alleged at an election rally in the western state of Maharashtra that BJP-led government was "mired in corruption" and "serious charges" had been levelled against the Prime Minister's office.

Sonia Gandhi also said the Congress would continue to take up the issue of sugar import deal with Pakistan.

Plan to set up land port at Banglabandha

PANCHAGARH, Sept 1: A proposal is under consideration of the government to set up a land port at Banglabandha, the Bangladeshi-Nepal transit point, reports UNB.

A district administration source said the proposed land port would have all facilities for movement of goods and tourists.

With the establishment of the land port at Banglabandha, it is expected that volume of trade will increase with India, Nepal and Bhutan, he said.

The facilities proposed for the land port would include a BOP adjacent to the BDR check post, immigration check post, offices, quarantine check post (agriculture), reception centre, goods loading and unloading compound, telephone, electricity, fire brigade, clearing and forwarding agents.

Deputy Commissioner of the district has worked out a preliminary plan and sent a proposal to the ministry concerned underlining the prospect of Banglabandha as a first class land port like Benapole.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh-Nepal transit route was inaugurated on September 1, 1997.

The route, however, did not function fully due to many reasons, including India's refusal to allow its territory to be used for transport movement.

2 muggers

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the DMCH. Police, however, failed to identify the pedestrian. He probably left the spot soon after the mob caught the muggers and started beating up, police said.

Emdad, who was taken to Demra thana custody, denied any attempt of mugging or involvement.

The bodies were sent to DMCH morgue for autopsy. None was arrested and no case was filed in connection with the incident till filing of this report last night.

Clinton's visit not confirmed yet: Humphrey

By Staff Correspondent

US President Bill Clinton might come to Bangladesh sometime early next year.

Calvin Humphrey, US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Energy, said this at a press briefing in the city yesterday.

Clinton's possible visit to Bangladesh will be part of his planned visit to South Asia in the first quarter of 2000, Humphrey told newsmen before his departure on conclusion of a four-day visit.

He, however, added the President's visit is not confirmed as yet.

Three Mongla Port officials charged with defalcation of Tk 1.25 cr

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Sept 1: Sharif Atiqur Rahman, member, engineer of Mongla Port Authority (MPA) has been charged with defalcation of Tk 1.25 crore in the name of repairing a crane for which no tender was floated.

The sub-committee of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Shipping has also charged Mosharraf Hossain, member, finance and Md Fazlul Huq, chief audit officer with the same offence and suggested suspension of the three officials.

A source in Mongla Port Authority said today that all the three officials are still in regular service despite suggestion by the sub-committee of the parliamentary standing committee comprising Mir Shakhawat Ali Daru MP, Gollam Faruque Ovi MP and Mrs Mahmuda Shawgat MP.

The sub-committee unearthed more defalcations in purchasing a microbus, constructing vessel berth jetty and pursuing about 100 cases in lower courts for which the MPA spent an amount of Tk 26,06,080 from 1980-81 fiscal to 1997-98 fiscal.

Khulna city AL leader held

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Sept 1: Alhaj Monir Hossain, a top ranking leader of city Awami League, was arrested from his Khalishpur residence at midnight on Tuesday.

He was wanted in connection with two criminal cases, including embezzlement of fund of Mongla port authority. Alhaj Monir is also a suspect in two murder cases filed with Khalishpur thana last year, police said.

CU liaison body to begin talks with student bodies today

From CU Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Sept 1: The newly-formed four-member liaison committee will start talks with seven student organisations at the Chittagong University from tomorrow for immediate reopening of the university.

On the first day, the committee will sit with Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), on September 4 with Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), on September 5 with Samajtantrik Chhatra Front (SCF) and Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS), on September 6 with Bangladesh Chhatra Union (BCU) and Islami Chhatra Sena (ICS) and on September 7 with Jatiya Chhatra Samaj (JCS).

Earlier, the university authorities had formed a four-member liaison committee headed by Prof. Imran Hossain, Dean of the Arts Faculty to discuss immediate reopening of the university with the student bodies.

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