

Sirajganj-7
Low turnout,
irregularities
& violence

By Nazmul Ashraf back
from Sirajganj

Low turnout of voters, irregularities and stray incidents of violence marked yesterday's by-election in the Sirajganj-7 constituency of the Jatiya Sangsad.

Apprehension of violence, threats by rival candidates and people's indifference and preoccupation with farming and other day-to-day activities were identified as the main reasons for the low turnout.

Polling was peaceful and uninterrupted in all but one centres. Turnout of voters in most of the 62 centres was low. The centres were heavily guarded by

Triple murder:
3 placed on
fresh remand

By Court Correspondent

Three people arrested in connection with the triple murder case were taken on a three-day fresh police remand yesterday.

The three, identified as Saiful Alam, Ahmed Hossain and Abdus Satter were arrested on November 24, for their alleged involvement in the killing of Sajedunnesa, her son Swapna and daughter Sabiha Begum at Azimpur under Lalbagh thana on November 21.

The accused were produced before the CMM's court yesterday with a prayer for seven-day remand. The court granted for three days.

A total of five people were arrested by Lalbagh police for their alleged involvement in the killing.

Two of them — Sufia Begum, sister of the victim Sajedunnesa and Obaidul Akber, son of Sufia Begum — were sent to the Dhaka Central Jail after a court order.

Obaidul Akber gave a conditional statement before the CMM's court on November 25. Akber confessed that he along with his five accomplices killed the three to grab a piece of land.

Blocks 15, 16 & Sangu
Petrobangla okays
transfer of
operatorship

Petrobangla has approved the transfer of operatorship of gas blocks 15 and 16 and offshore Sangu gasfield from Cairn Energy to Shell Bangladesh, reports UNB.

Cairn Energy PLC has received a formal notification from Petrobangla in this regard, said a press release of Shell Bangladesh yesterday.

Shell Bangladesh Exploration and Development BV will now operate and conduct all exploration, development and production activities in blocks 15 and 16, including the Sangu gasfield.

With its additional resources and technological capabilities, Shell will operate the increasing size and complexity of the Shell/Cairn joint venture and the development of its long-term plans in Bangladesh.

Completion of the transfer has not affected Shell and Cairn's interest holdings and they remain aligned on a 50/50 basis. In the specific area of the Sangu development, HBR Energy Inc. is also a partner.

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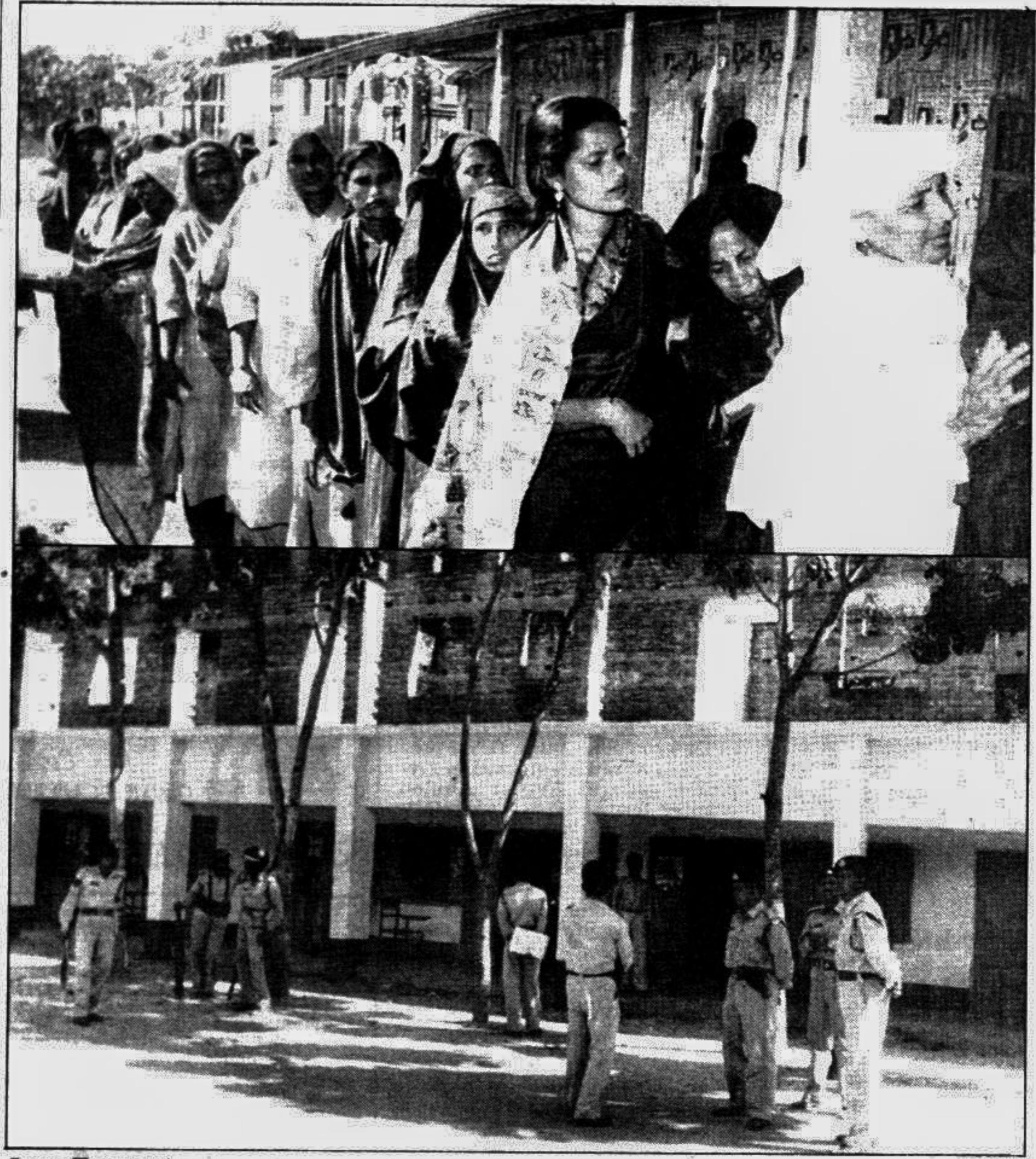
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Prayer Timings

December 9		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-15	5-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Aar	3-42	4-00
Maghrib	5-18	5-23
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

By-polls held without opposition presence
**Both Alauddins win but
Swapan gets the shock**



Low Turnout

Voters in a queue at Bangabandhu Women's College Centre at Shahjadpur (top) and Shahjadpur Ibrahim Pilot High School Centre at around noon yesterday. — Star photo

Star Report

Ruling party candidate and former deputy minister Hasibur Rahman Swapan suffered a shock defeat at the hands of an expelled party leader in one of the three bypolls held yesterday.

Swapan lost his Sirajganj-7 seat to Chayan Islam, the rebel Awami League man who lost his position as the party's Shahjadpur thana president for disregarding the party decision nominating the former.

Chayan drew 55,907 votes while Swapan could manage only 33,992. The EC said 51 per cent cast their votes.

In two other seats, where voting marked a lower turnout, the ruling party nominees won. Less than a fourth of the voters registered in the Rajshahi seat polling.

Major opposition parties boycotted the polls questioning the Election Commission's neutrality and demanding resignation of the government and the CEC.

In Kishoreganj-1, Professor Alauddin Ahmed beat another renegade Fazlur Rahman. The professor who quit as vice chancellor of Jahangirnagar University to vie for the seat polled 58,865 votes. Fazlur Rahman got 28,875. The turnout of voters was about 44 per cent.

In Rajshahi-5, former state minister Alauddin had an easy sail to retain his seat when only 22.6 per cent took an interest in the voting.

The Awami League-turned-BNP-turned-Awami League man beat his nearest independent rival Abdul Razzaq who polled only 1,560 votes. Alauddin got 39,226.

Ershad-led JP's Abdul Gafur Shah who had withdrawn from the race three days to the polling bagged 1,496 votes. Shah protested.

Both Swapan and Alauddin (Rajshahi-5) lost their seats for

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**Home ministry plans
crackdown on
illegal immigrants**

By Staff Correspondent

Foreigners who want to extend their visas will face tougher scrutiny under a home ministry plan designed to slash the number of illegal visitors.

The ministry ordered immigration officials to crack down on foreigners after it received intelligence reports that indicated there are many who stay in Bangladesh without valid visas, work without permits or become involved in 'anti-state' activities.

A source said police suspect foreign involvement in a spate of recent bombings and the recovery of high powered explosives in the city, although he declined to give more information about these cases.

"Immigration authorities are raising objections when people without valid visas try to extend their stay in the country," said a top ranking official.

A source said a "few hundred" foreign nationals, mainly Indians, Sri Lankans and Filipinos, work in various NGOs and private companies without valid work permits.

Immigration officials will now verify each application before granting a visa extension. The cases of "genuine" foreigners will always be considered, said the source.

Indeed, visa extensions could generate substantial revenue for the ministry after the necessary formalities, he said.

When asked if foreign nationals were being harassed in the name of verification of the

**Police, terrorists
exchange fire:
Rickshawpuller
killed in Ctg**

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 8: A rickshawpuller was shot dead during a clash between police and a group of terrorists in Golpahar area in the city last night.

Police said the victim Md Babul, 35, received bullet wounds at 11 pm when the terrorists opened fire on patrol police.

The terrorists also hurled cocktails at the police team, police retaliated with shots that resulted in injuries of two terrorists, police said.

The injured terrorists were caught and later taken to Medical College Hospital by police.

Police sources said a group of armed terrorists attempted to loot a bank branch near Golpahar area last night. When police chased the terrorists, they opened fire on police from a microbus, sources added.

**Lankans win
Test series**

HARARE, Dec 8: Sri Lanka won the Test series here 1-0 against Zimbabwe when the last of the three matches fizzled out into a draw thanks to a stubborn 70 not out from home captain Andy Flower, who ended with a series average of over 97, reports AFP.

The visitors, who were 36-1 when the match was called off, took the second Test in Harare and drew the first in Bulawayo.

With a day-and-a-half of the five days lost through bad weather, there was not enough time for either side to snatch victory.

**Rayer Bazar memorial to be opened
on Martyred Intellectuals' Day**

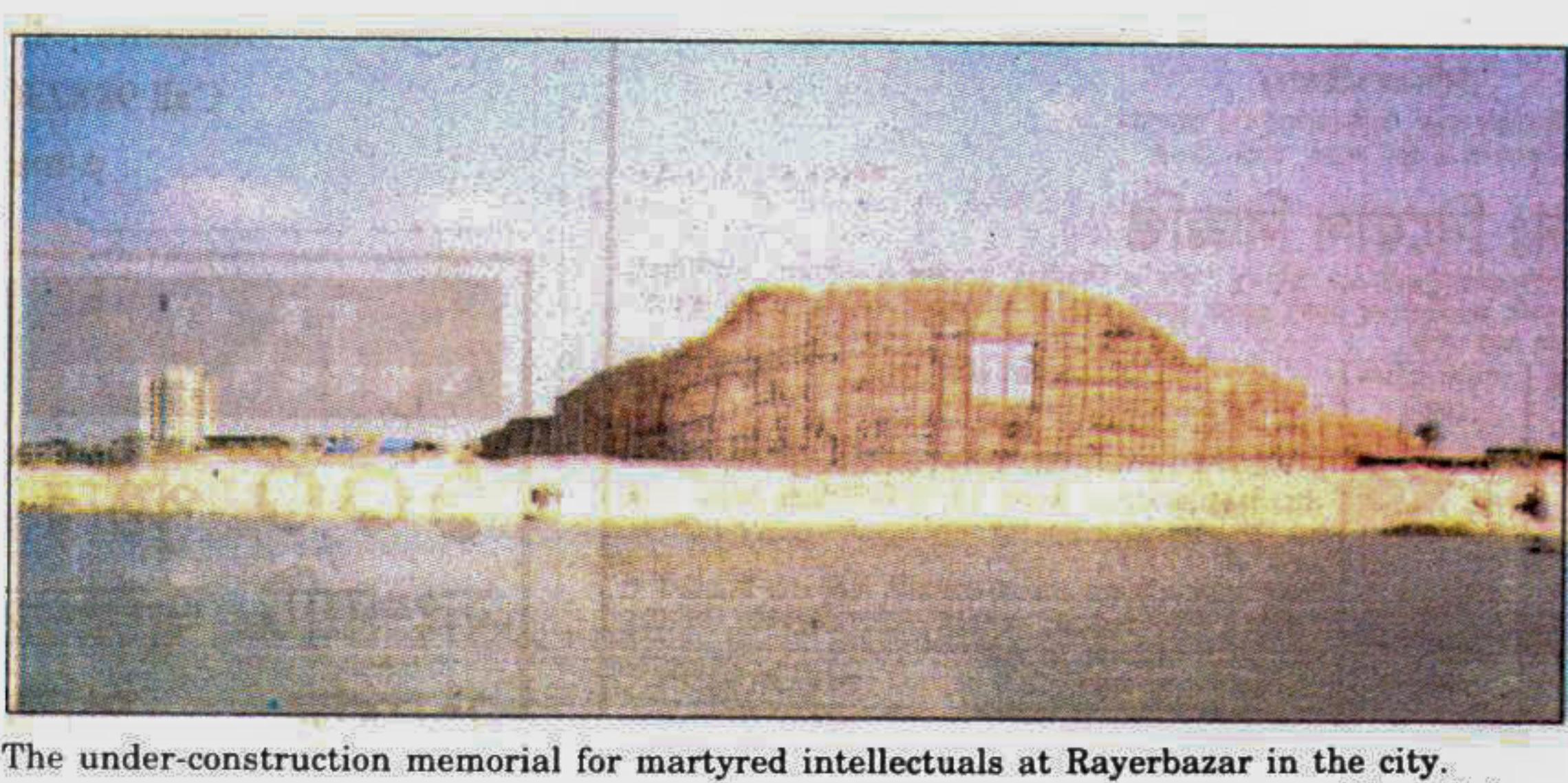
By Moshed Ali Khan

Construction of the Martyred Intellectuals' Memorial at Rayer Bazar in the city will be completed before December 14, the Martyred Intellectuals' Day, contractors and designers of the project said yesterday.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina would open the Memorial on December 14, an official announcement said.

Works Minister Engr Mosharraf Hossain along with other officials visited the site yesterday.

On December 14, 1971, the Pakistani occupation forces and their collaborators, sensing defeat to advancing freedom fighters, systematically



The under-construction memorial for martyred intellectuals at Rayerbazar in the city. —Star photo

**Sharif faces series of charges:
Hearing delayed till Monday**



KARACHI, Dec 8: Prosecution lawyers today submitted a lengthy charge sheet against deposed premier Nawaz Sharif accusing him of treason, kidnapping, attempted hijacking, attempted murder, criminal conspiracy and abetment, reports AP.

Sharif did not enter a plea and Justice Shabir Ahmed adjourned the hearing until Monday, when it is expected formal charges would be filed.

The charge sheet was presented to the anti-terrorist court, which will eventually hear the case against the ex-prime minister.

On Monday Sharif and his coaccused, including his younger brother, Shahbaz, are expected to enter a plea.

The charges carry varying penalties from the death penalty to life in prison to lesser prison terms.

The charges stem from an incident on Oct 12, the same day of the coup, in which a passenger aircraft returning Army Chief Gen Pervez Musharraf to Pakistan was denied permission to land in Karachi.

The plane was eventually allowed to land — with just seven minutes' of fuel to spare — after army soldiers took over the Karachi Airport control tower, removed two fire engines blocking the runway and switched on the runway lights.

The judge ordered the prosecution to hand over documents, including the transcripts of witnesses, to Sharif's defense

lawyers to allow them to prepare a case. Also the judge ordered all video and audio cassettes from the Air Traffic Control tower and the prime minister's residence given to Sharif's lawyers along with the black box voice recorder from the aircraft.

The Urdu-language charge sheet that was presented to the court accused the former prime minister of "endangering the lives of Gen Musharraf and others." It also said that the accused "wanted the aircraft to crash after running out of fuel."

Sharif has steadfastly denied the charges and accused the army of hijacking democracy and Pakistan's constitution.

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**Tk 212.50 cr UK
grant for rural
hygiene,
sanitation**

Bangladesh will receive 29.60 million pounds, equivalent to Tk 212.50 crore, as grant from the United Kingdom under an agreement signed in the city yesterday, reports UNB.

The amount would be utilised for the 'UNICEF-Bangladesh Rural Hygiene, Sanitation and Water Supply Project,' said a press release.

The purpose of the project is to improve hygienic practice and behaviour especially for the poor on a sustainable basis, contributing to reducing mortality, morbidity and malnutrition caused by diarrhoea and other water borne diseases.

Joint Secretary of the Economic Relations Division M Abdur Razzaque and Head of the DFID-Bangladesh Kevin Sparkhall signed the agreement.

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Ramadan
begins
tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent
The holy month of Ramadan begins tomorrow (December 10), said a press release of the Islamic Foundation.

The decision in this regard was taken at a meeting of the National Moon Sighting Committee yesterday as the moon was not sighted. State Minister for Religious Affairs Moulana Md Nurul Islam presided the meeting.

The meeting also said that the Holy Shab-e-Qadr would be observed on January 4.

Among others present in the meeting were Religious Affairs Minister Secretary Md Mahfuz Sobhan and Islamic Foundation Director General Moulana Abdul Awal.

Reuter adds: The holy month of Ramadan begins in Saudi Arabia today, the country's top religious council said yesterday.

Other Gulf Arab states, including the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman and Kuwait, made similar announcements.

**4 parties reject
CCC election
schedule**

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP-led opposition alliance has rejected the Chittagong City Corporation polls schedule and demanded its immediate cancellation.

"We will do everything necessary to resist the CCC polls" BNP Vice-chairman M Shamsul Islam told newsmen yesterday after presiding over a meeting of the Liaison Committee of the four-party alliance that reviewed the schedule announced by the Election Commission on Tuesday.

The alliance components will observe 'demonstration day' in all divisional and district headquarters today to protest declaration of the polls schedule, according to a decision of the meeting, held at the official residence of the Leader of the Opposition in parliament.

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**Canada refuses
to extradite
alleged killer
of Bangabandhu**

TORONTO, Dec 8: Canada has refused to extradite a former senior military officer allegedly involved in the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding father of Bangladesh, saying it has no extradition treaty with Dhaka, reports IANS.

Bangladesh has issued an international warrant against the officer, Nur Chowdhury. But the Canadian government refused to extradite the officer, who reportedly claimed refugee status in Canada, as the country has no extradition treaty with Bangladesh.

A spokesman for Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs Sean Rowan said, "We don't have an extradition treaty with Bangladesh."

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**Brigadier
commits
suicide?**

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, December 8: Brigadier Shabab Ashfaq, Commander of 69 Infantry Brigade based in Bandarban, was found dead at Chittagong Cantonment Officers' Mess at 4pm today.

Military intelligence sources claimed that he committed suicide. Other sources