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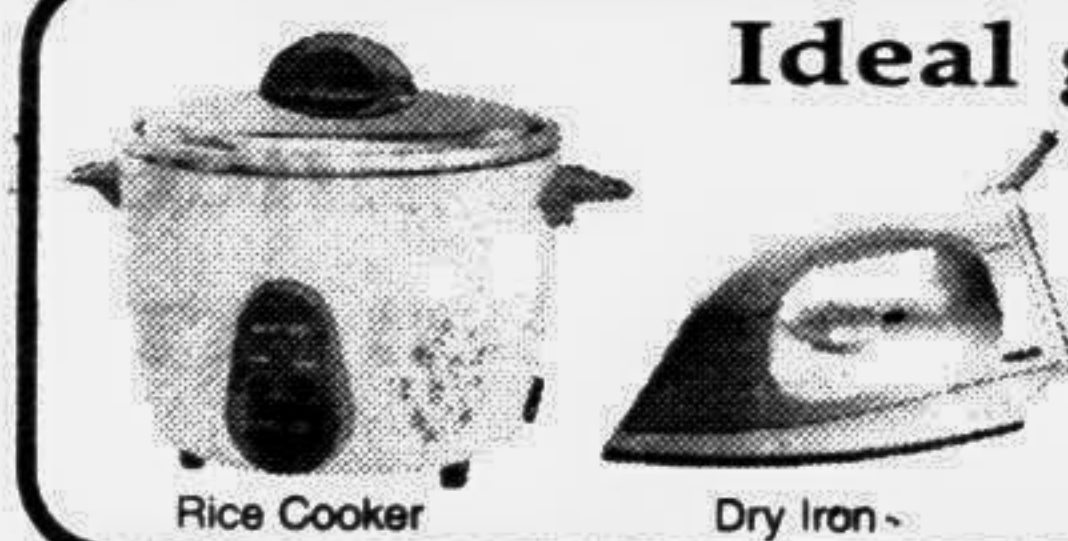
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BNP believes in communal harmony, says Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent
BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday said that the government has miserably failed to ensure security of life and property of the people, especially of the minority community of the country.

She said there was no security of the people belonging to the minority communities under the present regime. The minority citizens used to live in peace and harmony during the BNP rule, she added.

She said this when a group of 40 people of Bangladesh Scheduled Caste community, led by Principal Ganesh Halder, called on her at 29 Minto Road official residence and formally joined the BNP.

The members of the group hailed from Bagerhat, Khulna, Moulvibazar, Madaripur and Gopalganj districts. The newcomers also included three tribal people.

Welcoming the new-comers to her party, she said that the BNP government had implemented a number of welfare-oriented programmes for the development of the minorities in Bangladesh.

Calling upon the minority people to join her party, she said the BNP believes in communal harmony and equal rights of all citizens irrespective of cast and religion.

Addressing the function, the schedule cast leaders observed that the minority people had compared the BNP and Awami League and found the former 'much better'. Leaders alleged that the AL government had betrayed the minorities as it had forgotten its pledges to the minority.

Convenor of the Jatiyatatabadi Schedule Cast Cell Karik Thakur also spoke on the occasion.

Body to look into problems in Dhanmondi R/A

By Staff Correspondent

The government has formed a six-member committee to look into the traffic jam problem in Dhanmondi residential area and the feasibility of constructing two 'low cost' bridges on the lake at roads 4a and 5, DCC sources said.

The move by the department concerned to build the bridges follows ECNEC's recent rejection of a similar recommendation by a high powered committee of the Dhanmondi Lake Development Project, the sources said.

A move is also underway to create parking facilities on the premises of schools, colleges, clinics, hospitals and community centres in the area. None of these institutions have such facilities now. The committee will ensure that these institutions have their own parking facilities, which will greatly help solve the traffic problem.

The committee, with LGRD Chief Engineer Ataulah Bhuiya as its Convenor and DCC Executive Engineer Md Ashiqur Rahman Member Secretary, includes representatives from PWD, Roads and Highways Department and Rajuk as members.

Call to send Alema Bhashani abroad for treatment

By Staff Correspondent

The National Awami Party (Bhashani) yesterday appealed to the government and the affluent section of the society to come forward with assistance to save the life of Begum Alema Khatun Bhashani, who is suffering from cancer.

Wife of late great public leader Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, Alema Bhashani needs to be sent to Singapore immediately for treatment. Executive President of NAP (Bhashani) A K M Golam Kabir said at a press conference at a city hotel.

Cancer was detected in her body at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University on November 18. The killer disease has already crossed Grade-1 and reached Grade-2, which is very dangerous, he said quoting doctors.

Kabir said though the cancer was detected 22 days ago, none from the Cancer Society came to her help.

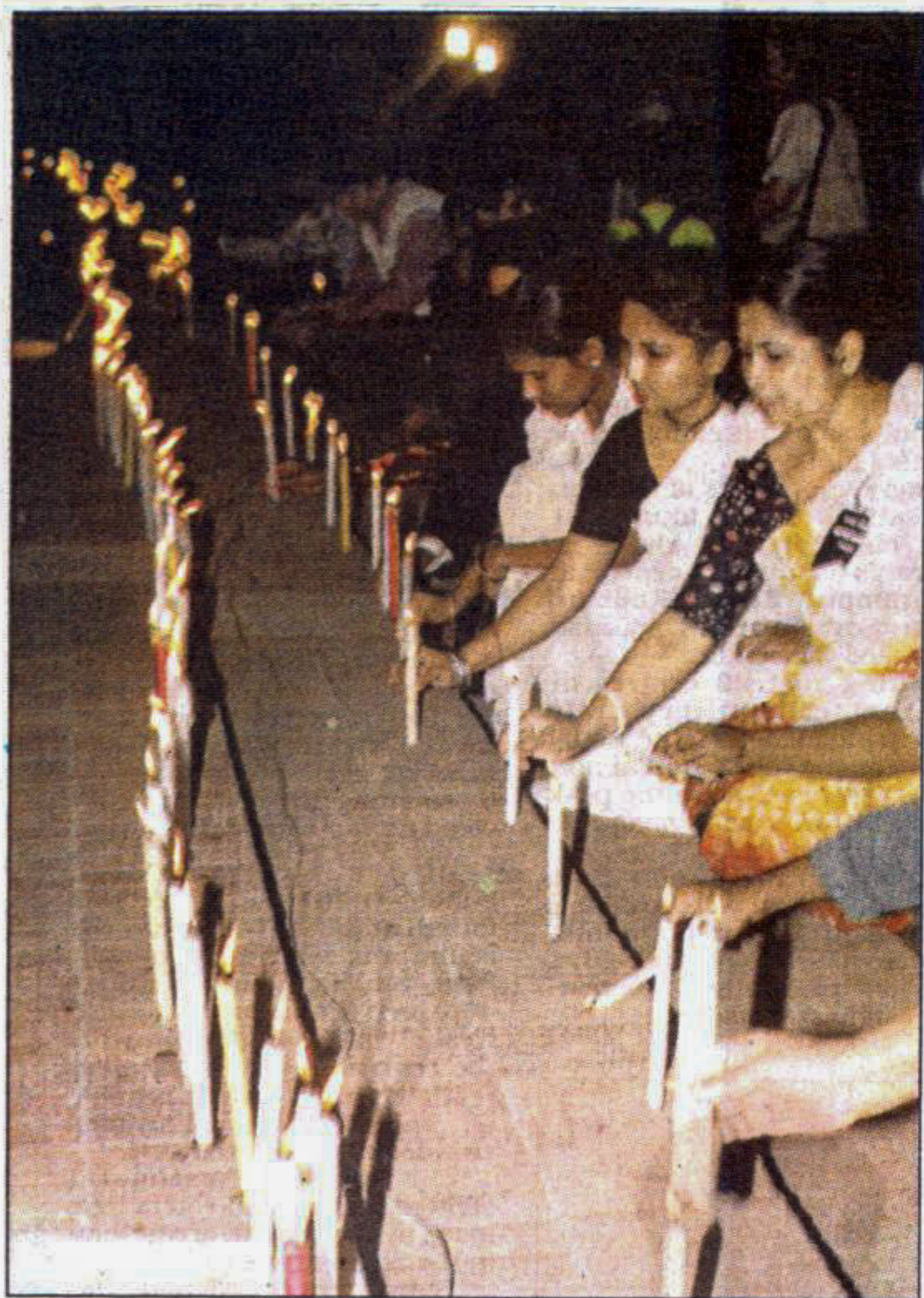
He said the government sent many people abroad for treatment in the past and hoped that steps would be taken for treatment of Alema, 90.

The party has formed a 5-member committee to look after her treatment.

Regarding the treatment at BSMMU, Kabir said in one report her name was mentioned as Halema Khatun, 90. In another report, her name was written correctly but the age was mentioned as 30. In another report, her age was mentioned as 70.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

Published by the Editor from City Publishing House Ltd., 90 Kakrail, Dhaka-1000 on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd., 52 Motiheel C.A., Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No. 11, Road No. 3, Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka-1205. PABX: 861672-4, Commercial: 8616771, Fax No: 88-02-8613035, GPO Box No. 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA. Internet edition address: <http://www.dailystarnews.com> and Email address: dstar@bangla.net



Let there be light

Candles are lit in a ceremony organised by Naripokkhko, a women's group that aims to bury the societal darkness.

— Star photo

Fatik Murder Case Shikdar's bodyguard taken on remand

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Dec 8: Ershad Shikdar's chief bodyguard Noor-e-Alam has been taken on five days' remand by CID for questioning about the murder of Advocate Fatik.

Fatik was killed allegedly for having illicit relation with Khodeja, first wife of Ershad. The murder case is now being investigated by Mokshed Ali, ASP of CID, Dhaka.

The former IO of this case ASP Khandaker Iqbal has been transferred to Sardah Police Academy for being one of the beneficiaries of Ershad Shikdar. Shikdar bribed him for deleting his name from the chargesheet in Fatik murder case.

The new IO has started dealing with this case through re-checking of case docket and questioning of eyewitnesses.

KMP officials responsible for trying to conceal this murder case with mala fide intention will also be brought to book, said a source in the KMP.

Meanwhile, DC Abdullah Azad Chowdhury left KMP headquarters this evening. He handed over charge to DC Nazmul Huq.

DC Azad has been transferred to Khagrachhari as CO of APBN. He is also one of the beneficiaries of Ershad.

The Additional Police Commissioner (on deputation) A H M Nooruddin will also leave Khulna tomorrow to join the RMP. He is also one of Shikdar's beneficiaries.

Both the officials tried to undermine the spirit of operations against Ershad, said KMP sources.

Tofail tells press on return LDCs should get duty, quota free access to western markets

By Staff Correspondent

The world's least developed nations should get duty and quota free access to western markets before the WTO meets in Geneva next year, said the commerce and industry minister yesterday.

"Duty and quota free market access is the only way to integrate our economies with a multilateral trading system," said Tofail Ahmed during a press conference at the Secretariat on the outcome of the recent World Trade Organization meetings in Seattle.

Ahmed served as the spokesman for 48 of the world's least developed countries during the decisive 19-hour, 26 nation 'greenroom' meeting.

"We have been marginalised by globalisation and liberalisation," said Ahmed. However, "developing countries benefited from the third ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), since developed countries have agreed to consider our demand."

Ahmed said all participants accepted the 22-point declaration adopted by the trade ministers from the world's least developed nations at an earlier meeting.

3 get Rokeya Padak '99

The government will confer Rokeya Padak '99 on three women for their outstanding contribution to advancement of the womenfolk, reports UNB.

The recipients are Anwara Mansoor, Manorama Basu Masima (posthumous) and Angela Gomez.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will hand over the medals to them at a function here on December 23, said an official announcement last night.

Office timing during Ramadan

The government has rescheduled the office time from 9 am to 3:30 pm with 15 minutes break for Jorh prayers for the month of Ramadan, reports UNB.

This time schedule will be followed in all the government, semi-government, autonomous and semi-autonomous institutions.

After the month of Ramadan the previous time schedule from 9 am to 5 pm will come into effect with 30 minutes break for lunch and prayers from 1 pm.

Bomb hurled on tempo at Kajla: 5 injured

By Staff Correspondent

At least five people were injured when some miscreants hurled a bomb on a tempo at Kajla under Demra thana in the city yesterday afternoon.

According to hospital sources, the tempo was carrying people who were supposed to attend a rally of the supporters of 'Pir of Charmonai in the city's Paltan area.

Of the injured, three were identified as Sumon, 22, Nannu Mia, 30, and Biplob, 28. They were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, sources said.

Sumon's condition was stated to be critical. He sustained injuries in his back and leg, sources added.

The bomb was hurled on the tempo when it was crossing Kather Pool area at about 3 pm.

Demra police said they heard about the incident and their officials were investigating the incident. No case, however, was lodged till filing of this report last night.

4 parties reject

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Khaleda Zia. People will resist the "one party election". People want resignation of the government and holding of parliamentary elections first under a caretaker government, a resolution adopted at the meeting said.

By announcing the polls schedule unilaterally, the Election Commission has once again proved its subservience to the government, it said.

The meeting was attended by BNP leader Anwar Zahid, Jatiya Party Presidium members ABM Golam Mostafa and Kazi Firoz Rashid, Jamaat-e-Islami Publicity Secretary Abdul Qader Mollah and IOJ leader ARM Abdul Matin.

The secretaries general of the four parties will meet at 10am today to discuss the issue and future course of action, sources said.

Meanwhile central leaders of BNP and its front organisations at a meeting yesterday also rejected the polls schedule and demanded its immediate cancellation.

The meeting decided that the party and its front organisations would hold rallies and bring out processions in districts today demanding cancellation of the polls schedule.

Canada writes off Biman's Tk 2cr loan

By Special Correspondent

Canada has waived over Tk two crore loans given to Bangladesh Biman by the Canadian Export Development Corporation (EDC) under a deal signed in 1990 for procurement of engines for ATP aircraft.

Canadian High Commissioner David Preston yesterday handed over a letter containing his government's decision in this regard to Biman's Managing Director Air Commodore Rafiqul Islam at its head office.

The decision was taken as per his government's policy to waive debts of Third World countries "whose track records of not incurring huge debts are better". Preston told newsmen after handing over the letter.

He said the decision followed an announcement by Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien to give debt relief to Third World countries on the basis of the G-7 recommendation.

The Canadian government has written-off approximately 0.4 million Canadian dollars in future payments and reimbursed Biman approximately 0.2 million dollars, already paid by the national carrier.



Serajuddin, 50, came too. At Kishoreganj-1, turnout was lower than normal at 44 per cent but polling went peacefully that saw an academic beat a rebel party colleague.

— Star photo by Anisur Rahman

Assault on newsmen

Action against policemen assured

Staff Correspondent
Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police AKM Shamsuddin yesterday assured newsmen that departmental action would be taken against the policemen involved in assaulting a reporter on December 1.

The assurance was given by the DMP Commissioner at a meeting with leaders of Crime Reporters Association of Bangladesh (CRAB) at his office, said a DMP press release.

Azhar Ali Sarkar, a senior reporter of Bangladesh Patrika was confined by police in a room at the DC South office complex and tortured for about half an hour on December 1.

He was released when other reporters rushed there along with police from Ramna thana.

Two traders shot in city

By Staff Correspondent

Two traders were shot by hoodlums in separate incidents at Tipu Sultan Road and at Rajdhani Super Market in the city yesterday.

They were identified as Javed Hossain, 25, a hardware trader and Abul Kalam, 26, a ready-made garment trader at Rajdhani Super Market under Sutrapur thana in the city.

Javed was shot in his legs and hands when two groups of local terrorists were trading fire.

He was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) later shifted to the Orthopaedic (Pongu) Hospital.

Meanwhile, Sutrapur police said Javed is involved in criminal activities in the area. Police also said last night that none had filed a complaint in this connection.

The second incident took place at about 4 pm when Kalam refused to pay toll to extortionists. The gang dragged him out of his shop and shot in his legs.

Call to collect, publish works of Dewan Azraf

By DU Correspondent

Speakers at a condolence meeting in the city yesterday paid rich tributes to national professor Dewan Mohammad Azraf.

Recalling the contribution of the late educationist and thinker, they said that his works would continue to inspire the future generations of the country.

Dewan Mohammad Azraf, founder principal of Abujar Giffari College, died at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases on November 1, the day after his 93rd birthday. He was a grand son of poet Hasan Raja.

Terming him a modest and honest man, the speakers called for immediate steps to collect the valuable writings of Dewan Azraf and compile those in the form of books.

They also regretted that he is not being given 'due honour' even after his death.

Dewan Azraf was often misunderstood for his Islamic countenance and his way of living and thoughts. But he was perhaps a more secular man than many others, they said.

In his long and illustrious career Dewan Azraf served at different educational institutions in different capacities, till he founded the Abujar Giffari College in the capital in 1973.

They prayed for eternal peace of the soul of the late philosopher. A special *munaajat* was offered for the salvation of the departed soul.

Noted litterateur and national professor Syed Ali Ahsan presided over the meeting while Prof. Shahed Ali chaired the programme at the Jatiya Press Club auditorium. Former Vice-chancellor of Dhaka University Dr Emajuddin Ahmed, Dr Anisuzzaman, Rafiqullah Chowdhury, Shahabuddin Ahmed, Prof. Mahmudur Rahman, Abul Kashem Haider, Prof. Junaida Arah and Prof. Hasan Abdul Quaium took part in the discussion.

Alauddins, Swapan

From page 1

joining the Cabinet of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Both had won on BNP tickets in 1996. Swapan has had several turns in his political career.

The Kishoreganj-1 seat fell vacant following the death of ruling Awami League MP Shamsul Huq.

Election officials said they were happy with the way the elections went. By and large, according to our correspondents who visited the constituencies, the elections conducted under heavy security were peaceful barring stray incidents in Sirajganj.

The correspondents said the opposition boycott was the reason behind the low turnout in most cases.

In all places, the voting began at 8am and continued till 4pm without break. The four-party opposition alliance called a hartal in Charchat in Bagha thana of Rajshahi to prevent the polling.

Our Rajshahi correspondent Abdul Wadood reported that there had been no incidents of violence or attempts to resist the vote. There was however an explosion of a home-made bomb. A BNP activist was detained on charges of anti-election campaign.

Wadood said polling agents of only Alauddin were active amid a poor turnout.

Alauddin was happy with the election, which described as "very positive" comparing it with a similar situation in February 1996.

"Today's election is far better than that of February 15 election," he told reporters.

Our Staff Correspondent Reaz Ahmad visited nine Kishoreganj centres and saw no incidents of violence. The candidates were generally happy with the election process, he reported. Their agents only made a few complaints of false voting in certain centres.

Election officials kept over a dozen young boys detained for hours in different centres as punishment for false voting.

As many as nine candidates contested in Kishoreganj, but

the two major candidates had their agents in the polling centres. The number of polling agents of Fazlur Rahman was also relatively less than that of Professor Ahmed.

Independent candidate Rahman, an expelled leader of ruling AL, won backing from former MP and expelled AL leader Kader Siddique.

Rahman, speaking to The Daily Star at 1:30pm at Egaroshindhu Primary school centre, said he was satisfied with the conduct of polling. "I have visited 11 centres so far and have the feeling that the administration is sincere about holding a fair election," Rahman said.

He said he met his rival Professor Ahmed at one of the centres barely two hours earlier. "I hugged my friend Dr Alauddin when I met him at Burudi High School and also wished him good luck, which was also reciprocated in the same tone," Rahman said.

Rahman's polling agents in different centres said they were satisfied with the polling process. Polling agents of Dr Alauddin gave similar statements.

Memorial

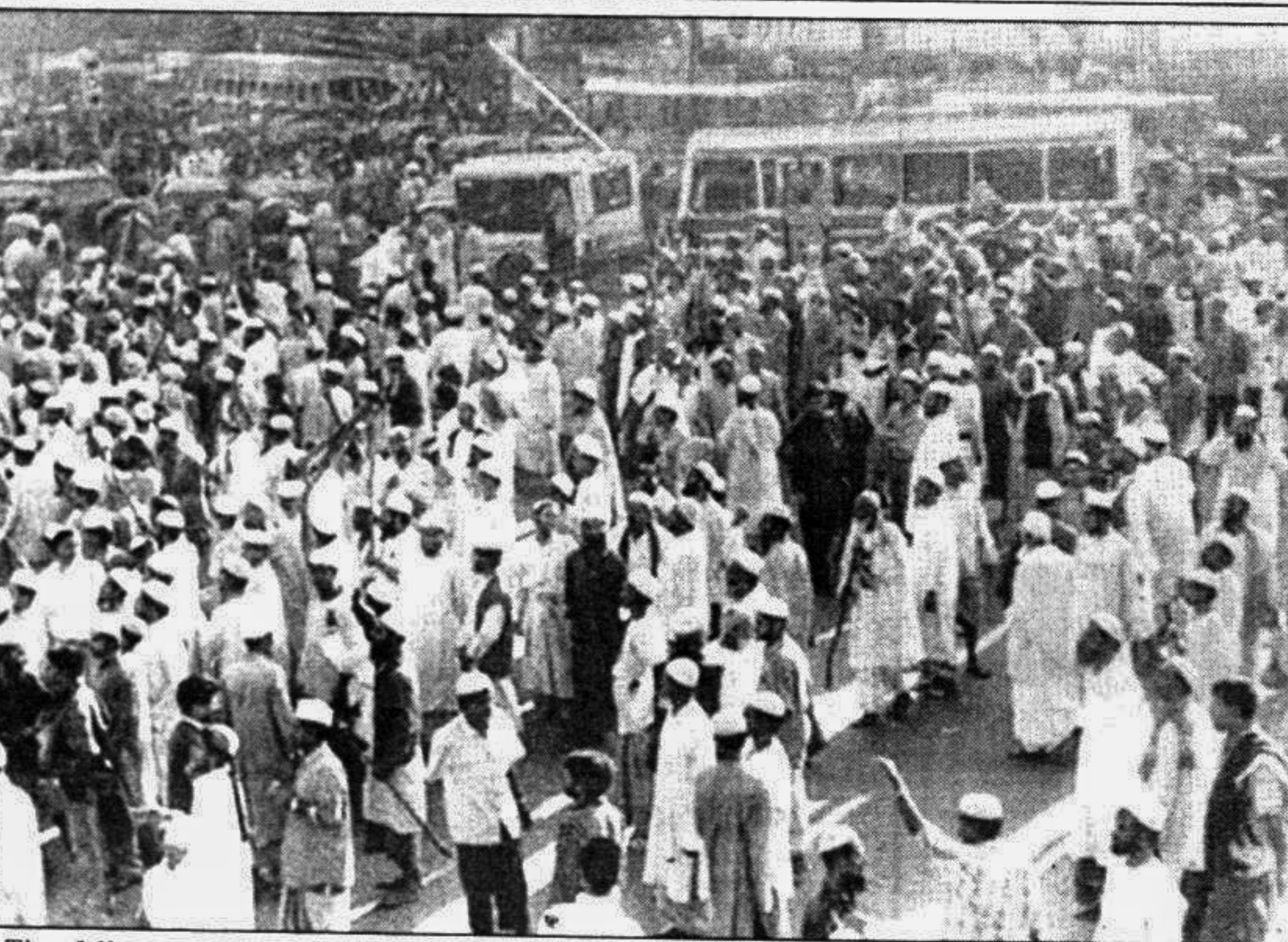
From page 1

adjacent to the 16 crore taka Memorial is now under consideration.

But the Dhaka City Corporation has plans to build a truck terminal by filling up a portion of the Haikkar Khal, low cost houses and a graveyard near the Memorial.

The DCC has temporarily shelved the projects in the face of public criticism but sources said lobbying is underway by some contractors, the parliament member from the area and the local ward commissioner to revive the projects.

The idea of constructing a truck terminal there was rejected by the Prime Minister recently when the local MP proposed to revive it, the sources confirmed.



The followers of Charmonai 'Pir' held a rally at Paltan Crossing in the city yesterday, creating traffic jam.

Doctors' strike

From page 1

this camp was opened mainly to help the poor patients.

The striking doctors and students of Chittagong Medical College today put up a barricade on the road in front of the college, halting traffic movement.

They also staged a demonstration on hospital premises and held a protest rally in the morning.

The students of Chittagong Medical College (CMC) boycotted their classes today demanding immediate arrest of the terrorists who attacked their teacher Dr Nikanta.

Police force was deployed in and around CMCH to foil any attempt of violence.

Meanwhile, the teachers and students of the University of Science and Technology continued their strike for the second day today expressing solidarity with the teachers and students of CMC.

Taj Mahal to be opened for night viewing

NEW DELHI, Dec 8: Indian authorities have decided to lift a 15-year ban and open the Taj Mahal monument for night viewing by tourists, a state minister said today, reports AFP.

Tourists will be able to see the imposing 17th-century white marble monument five nights every month, including the full moon night and two nights preceding and succeeding it. The full moon night this month falls on December 22.

"Four operators across the world have been demanding that the Taj should be opened at night, and we decided it was time we submitted to the request," Uttar Pradesh state Tourism Minister Ashok Yadav told the agency.

But Yadav said there were no plans to open it on the night of December 31 for the dawn of the year 2000. "We have no such idea."

The Taj Mahal is located on the bank of the river Yamuna at Agra, 200 kilometres south of New Delhi, in Uttar Pradesh.

The Taj, a monument of love

built by Moghul emperor Shahjahan in memory of his second wife Mumtaz, is a prime tourist attraction in India. It was visited by 626,000 tourists in 1998.

Yadav said he expected the numbers to go up by 20 per cent now.

"This decision would mean that more and more tourists would now spend the night at Agra instead of returning to Delhi by night after seeing the Taj," he said.

The Taj Mahal is open daily except Mondays from 6 am to 7 pm.

Yadav said night viewing for foreign tourists would cost 2,500 rupees (62.5 dollars) — five times the cost of day-time visit.

The monument, however, can be viewed free on Fridays. The Indian government decided to close night viewing of the Taj Mahal 15 years ago on grounds of overcrowding and alleged threats to the Moghul structure.

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