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SKOP calls 24-hr strike on June 20

By Staff Correspondent
Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) has called for a countrywide 24-hour strike on June 20 to press home its demands.

The demands include implementation of the recommendations of National Wages Commission. Implementation of Democratic Labour Act and solution to the problems prevailing in the country's jute, yarn, textile and transport sectors.

The SKOP has also urged the government to implement its agreement signed with the government earlier.

Meanwhile, Waziruddin Khan MP and Habibul Rahman, President and General Secretary respectively of Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation (BRTWF) in a statement yesterday expressed solidarity with the SKOP-called strike on June 20.

The leaders called upon the transport workers to make the strike a success.

Khaleda continues one-to-one talk with party MPs

Opposition Leader Khaleda Zia continued her one-to-one talk with BNP MPs on their local problems, reports UNB.

"MPs are freely talking with party chief about their local problems and organisational matters. They are also giving their opinion on parliament issue, party spokesperson Zahiduddin Swapan told the news agency last night.

Four party MPs from Kushtia — Ahsan Ali, Prof Shahidul Islam, Abdul Khaleque Chontu and Syed Mehedi — and Rafiqul Islam Bakul from Pabna met Khaleda at her new office in Banani yesterday.

The exclusive talk started at 8 pm and was continuing till 10:30 PM. Though there was no

See page 11 col 8

All BNP MPs asked to be in Dhaka by today

By Special Correspondent
All BNP MPs have been asked to be in Dhaka by today by the party high command for an expected meeting of the BNP Parliamentary Party (BNPPP) soon, party sources said last night.

The BNPPP meeting is likely to take stock of the political situation and other issues arising out of their long absence from parliament, the sources added.

Further details were not available on the urgent summoning of the MPs. The BNP had been staying off parliament since June last year.

Inside Today

Article

Global nuclear disarmament agenda

Dangerous Decades Ahead?

Column: Panorama
By Dilara Chowdhury
Page 4

Business

Stock exchanges to have stronger circuit breaker from July 1

Industrial world near deal on easing aid conditions

Pages 8 & 9

Star Literature

Travelogue: Esfahan enchants; and Poetry: Hayat Saif — a poet of man and earth

Pages 6 & 7

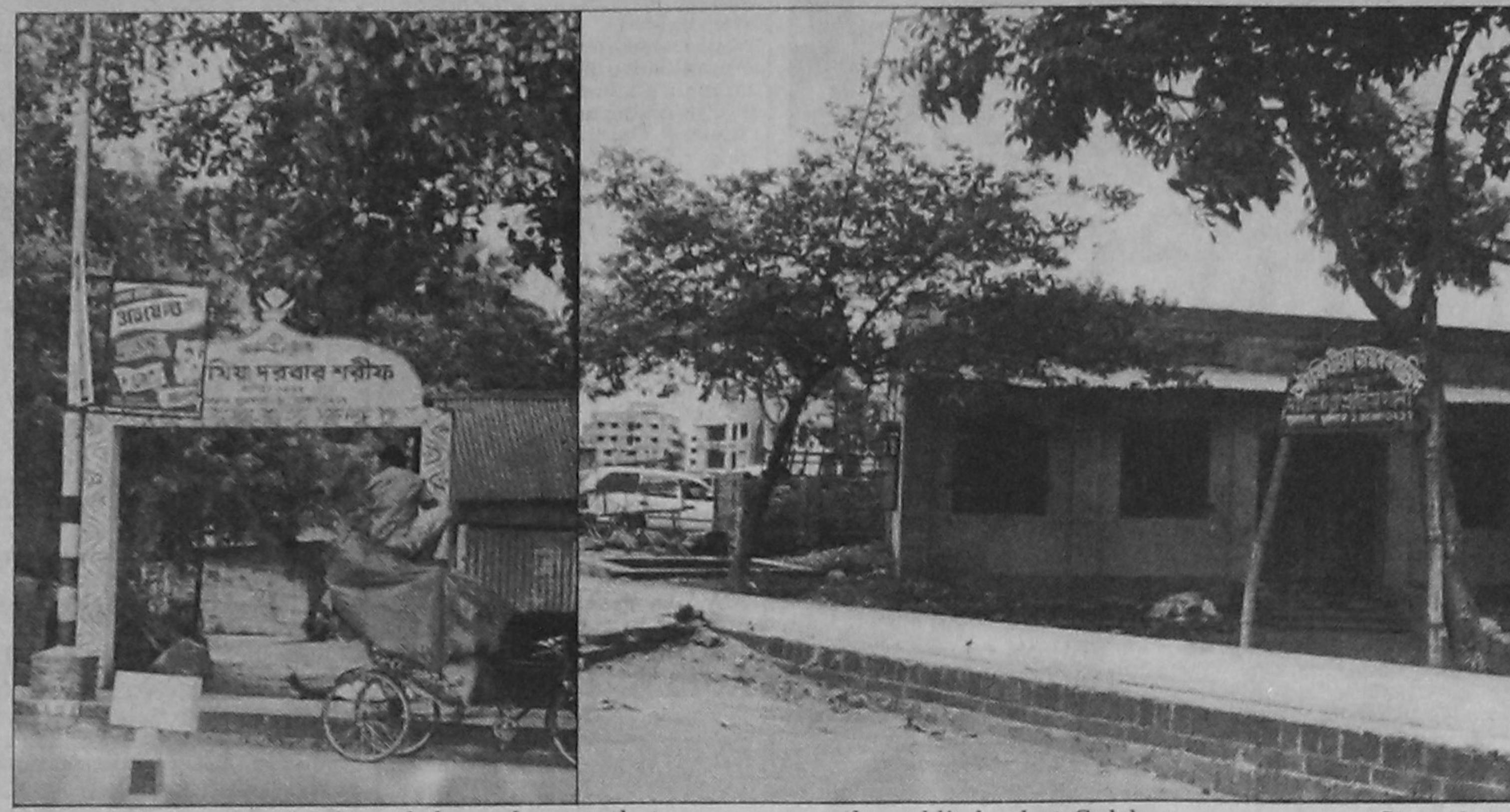
June	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
17		6-48pm
18	5-11 am	

Prayer Timings

June 17

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-45
Zohr	1-00	1-30
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-50	6-55
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation



The said *darbar sharif* (left) and the orphanage that sprang up on the public land at Gulshan.

—Star photo

'Safest' way to grab public land

Tale of an orphanage and a *darbar sharif*

By Staff Correspondent

A group of people backed by a section of local leaders of the ruling party have occupied more than one *bigha* of prime public land adjacent to Gulshan Taltala Park in the city in the name of a mosque, an orphanage and a *darbar sharif*.

The unregistered and unauthorised orphanage has 17 inmates aged between five and 15, its caretaker Hafez Din Mohammad claimed. The inmates are living in a very unhygienic and insecure dormitory. During a visit on Sunday, this correspondent saw some children sleeping on the earthen floor of the makeshift structure adjacent to the concrete mosque.

The orphanage was established in 1989. The caretaker, a bearded man in his mid-forties, said the children are from dif-

ferent parts of the country. Some were suffering from fever and they were administered paracetamol.

The 'complex' at Gulshan Section-1 comprises the orphanage, the mosque and a *darbar sharif* of a peer named Abdul Aziz who lives in Comilla and comes here at times, the caretaker said.

He admitted that the complex had no legal authorisation. He was running it with the active support of local Awami League leaders including MA Qader Khan, Al Haj Sultan Ahmed and Commissioner Motiz.

The Land Ministry has a total of 2.68 acres of land here. In a prayer to the Prime Minister's Office and the ministry, we

have requested for land for the three establishments," Din Mohammad said.

When asked what education the children were getting, the caretaker replied that he was teaching them *kartana* (reading the Holy Quran) and *hafizel* (memorising the Holy Quran). When asked how many batches passed from the orphanage since 1989, he replied that one boy became a *hafiz*.

Din Mohammad said that he did not have any register for the children. "The register was destroyed in 1998 flood and now we do not have any," he said.

Although the caretaker claimed that there were 17 orphans at the orphanage, only six were found who included the sick ones. The caretaker first said the rest were out and then

said they were on holiday.

None of the local leaders could be contacted for comment. Gulshan police said they were aware of the "unauthorised" mosque, but knew nothing about the orphanage.

When contacted, a Land Ministry official requesting anonymity claimed that some officials of the ministry were trying to grab this piece of public land. The so-called complex has been built to grab about three acres of prime land", he said.

It may be mentioned here that adjacent to the 'complex', Gulshan Taltala Park has been taken over for residences of Dhaka City Corporation sweepers.

Cronje tells the tale

CAPE TOWN, June 16: Expressionless and showing little visible sign of emotion, Hansie Cronje took just 45 minutes to confirm every allegation made against him at the King Commission as the hearings reached a climax with the former South African captain's long-awaited appearance in the witness box on Thursday, report agencies.

Cronje read a prepared 22-page statement to the commission in his characteristically flat monotone. He faced no questions on Thursday, with the hearings being adjourned until Tuesday when he will face cross-examination.

But 45 minutes was more than enough for Cronje to acknowledge his guilt in almost every important respect. He admitted his lies and spoke of his shame and humiliation. He also begged for the reinstatement of players Herschelle Gibbs and Henry Williams. "Herschelle lied to the UCB, his

employer at my request," he said. "Herschelle, forgive me."

There was little new in Cronje's statement, but he did name and gave amounts and dates of the payments that he now admits to receiving.

Cronje's statement was framed in chronological order, starting with an approach made to him before the 1995 Mandela Cup final against Pakistan in Cape Town. This confirmed the evidence of Pat Symcox given on the first day of the hearings, but Cronje named "John," an Indian or Pakistani man, as the person who had offered him 10,000 dollars to throw the match. Cronje suggested this might be the same "John" who had paid Australians Mark Waugh and Shane Warne for match forecasts.

The offer was turned down.

But Cronje also said that when he walked onto the field for the game, he was asked by Pakistan captain Salim Malik whether

Janakantha honours 3, cricket team

By Staff Correspondent

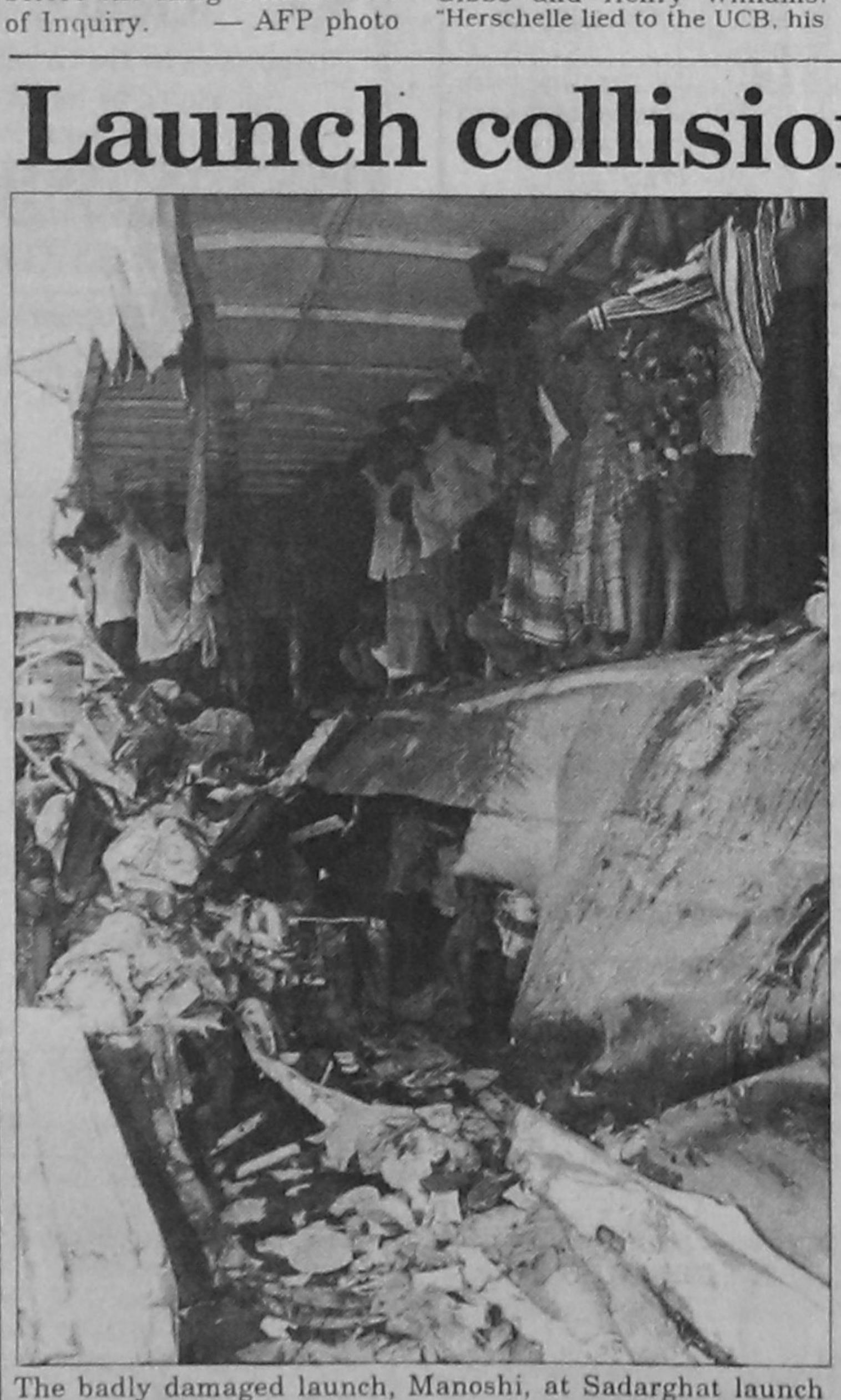
The Daily Janakantha yesterday honoured three noted personalities of the country for outstanding contributions in their respective fields.

The newspaper also gave awards to the members Bangladesh cricket team for their remarkable performance in the 1999 World Cup, specially against Pakistan and Scotland.

The three eminent personalities who were awarded the 'Janakantha Gunjan O Protiva Sammanana 1999' are Prof Sardar Fazlul Karim, litterateur Mahmudul Haque and freedom fighter Shahana Parveen Shova.

Poet Shamsur Rahman attended the programme as chief guest while Deputy Minister for LGRD and Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) President Saber Hossain Chowdhury was present as special guest. Moham-

See page 12 col 4



The badly damaged launch, Manoshi, at Sadarghat launch terminal yesterday.

45 still missing in Meghna

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, June 16: At least nine people were killed and 45 others missing when two passenger launches collided in the river Meghna near Badarpur channel under Hizla thana of the district on Wednesday night.

Police and witnesses said the accident occurred when a Dhaka-bound launch, MV Dweepraj-2, from Barisal with about 1500 passenger on board collided with Barguna's Amtal-bound launch, ML Manoshi-4, from Dhaka with about 600 passengers aboard near Badarpur channel of the river in the darkness, killing nine passengers of Manoshi on the spot.

Manoshi was badly damaged in the accident.

A three-member body led by chief surveyor of Shipping Directorate today began probe into the accident.

Several passengers, mainly from Manoshi, jumped into the river to avert death and were believed to have been washed away.

"None of them was found yet," said an employee of the ill-fated launch, Manoshi.

Of the dead, two were identified as Abdul Khaleque, 55, of south Amtal in Barguna and Monowara Begum, 40, of Gourachandra village under

Akram joins 400-wkt club

COLOMBO, June 16: Pakistani fast bowler Wasim Akram took his 400th Test wicket here today when he dismissed Sri Lanka's Russell Arnold for one on the third day of the first Test at the Sinhalese Sports Club ground, reports AFP.

Akram is the fourth in the world to join the elite 400-wicket club after Courtney Walsh (West Indies), Kapil Dev (India) and Sir Richard Hadlee (New Zealand).

See page 11 col 6

KHM faces closure due to import of hardboard

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, June 16: The profit-making Khulna Hardboard Mill (KHM) is facing closure due to import of hardboard, sources said.

Over 80 lakh cubic feet of hardboard are now stockpiled in the mill despite space constraint at its godown and production has been slowed as most of dealers are not lifting their quotas for months together.

The dealers say they incur loss as the market has been flooded by better quality imported hardboard.

The mill authorities have

given 130 out of the 449 dealers a June 30 deadline to lift their accumulated quotas or to face cancellation of dealership, the sources said. Dealership can be cancelled if quotas are not lifted for consecutive two months.

Apart from slashing production due to non-lifting of quotas, the mill is also facing some serious technical problems, the mill authorities said. The BCIC which owns the mill has asked the authorities to blacklist the dealers who would not lift their quotas by this

See page 11 col 6

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Interview for Biman cadet pilots: Why so haste?

By Special Correspondent

Bangladesh Biman is taking interviews of 10 candidates who qualified in the written examination for recruitment of Cadet Pilots for the national airlines amidst unsuccessful candidates' allegations of irregularities in the entire process.

Some of the disqualified candidates, preferring anonymity, said that 62 candidates sat for the three-hour written examination which began at 2 pm on Wednesday. The results were published at 10 pm the same day.

Earlier, the results of preliminary interview taken on May 27 were published after seven days.

They alleged that the board which conducted the examination was constituted without the Chief of Technical and the

chief pilots as an interim measure before