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Govt raises transport fare by 50pc

By Reaz Ahmad

The government yesterday raised bus and minibus fare by about 50 per cent against enhancement of fuel prices by 15 per cent on an average recently.

Bus fare now is 0.47 poisa and minibus fare 0.50 poisa per kilometre. Previously, the rates were 0.32 poisa and 0.35 poisa respectively.

The rates will be enhanced by another 0.15 poisa per kilometre next year.

On August 14, the government raised the prices of diesel and kerosene by 20 per cent from Tk. 13 to Tk 15.50 per

litre and that of petrol by 9.5 per cent from Tk 21 to Tk 23 per litre. The price of octane was also raised by nine per cent from Tk 23 to Tk 25 per litre.

The new fare rates were announced after a two-hour meeting between the government and leaders of a pro-government transport owners association.

Communications Minister Anwar Hossain Manju and State Minister for Communications Anisul Haq Chowdhury represented the government side. President of Bangladesh

Sarak Paribahan Samity and ruling party lawmaker Moqbul Hossain represented the transport owners association at the meeting, held at the Secretariat.

Chairman of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), Azizul Haq, who heads an Expert Committee on Transport Fare, was also present.

In an instant reaction, a bus passenger said the enhancement is 'too much' compared to an average 15 per cent rise in fuel prices.

Talking to The Daily Star last night the Communications

Minister said, "The rates have been raised on the basis of a recommendation of the Expert Committee."

Asked about probable public reaction to the huge enhancement, the minister said, "Passengers would now get relief from indiscriminate enhancement in fare as we have fixed a ceiling."

Manju said operators of inter-district luxury coaches would increase fare rates proportionately.

About 'premium' buses and See page 11 col 8

Akhtaruzzaman attends JS session

By Staff Correspondent

BNP lawmaker Maj (retd) Akhtaruzzaman joined the Jatiya Sangsad sitting yesterday, defying the party decision to continue boycott of JS sessions.

The dissident BNP leader, who was suspended from the party last week, entered the House at 10:55 am and spoke there twice.

Legislators belonging to the main opposition party, BNP, have been boycotting Sangsad sessions since July last year. However, they attended its last session briefly to save their parliament membership.

Akhtaruzzaman told the House yesterday that he joined its sitting to highlight the problems of his constituency - Kotiadi - and claimed that local unit of BNP and people of all the 10 unions in his constituency supported his return to parliament.

He noted that lawmakers

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BNP MP Akhtaruzzaman talks with an unidentified woman in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday. Akhtaruzzaman returned to House yesterday defying his party's decision to continue boycott of Parliament session. - AFP photo

OPEC to raise oil output

VIENNA, Austria, Sept 10: OPEC members agreed today to boost the group's official oil output by 800,000 barrels a day, two oil ministers in the petroleum producers cartel said, reports AP.

The decision, reached after four hours of informal talks in Vienna, came amid mounting international pressure on OPEC to pump more oil to stem surging fuel prices.

The new quota, which will be slightly higher than what many analysts had predicted, will start Oct 1. OPEC members

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SKOP's 48-hr rail-road barricade begins today

By Staff Correspondent

Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) will enforce a 48-hour rail-road barricade programme from this morning demanding implementation of the agreement signed with the government.

The agreement includes announcement of minimum wages, cancellation of privatisation process, reopening of all closed mills and reinstatement of retrenched workers.

Leaders and activists of SKOP yesterday brought out a procession and held a rally in front of Sonali Bank Head Office at Motijheel. The rally was addressed, among others, by SKOP leader Nazrul Islam Khan, Dr. Wajedul Islam Khan, Noor Hossain and Harun-ur-Rashid.

Speakers at the rally criticised the government for not implementing the agreement signed with SKOP two years ago.

Proposed strike at garment units postponed

Bangladesh Garments Sramik Oikya Parishad has postponed its Monday's 24-hour strike in garment industries, reports UNB.

The strike was postponed after a meeting between the leaders of BGMEA and the Parishad at BGMEA office here yesterday.

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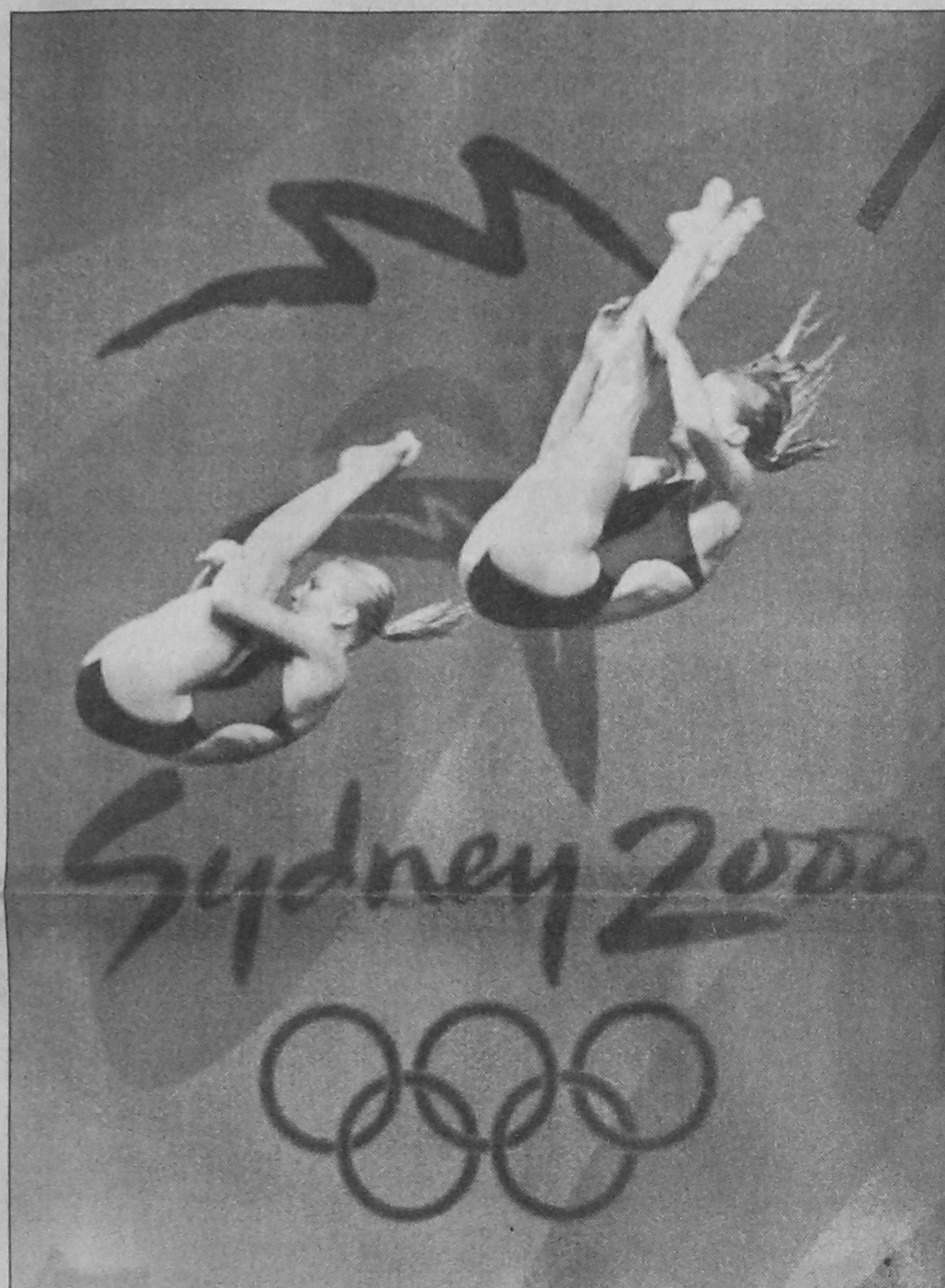
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	Sun Rises	Sun Set
Sept 11		6:06 pm
Sept 12	5:44 am	

Prayer Timings

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4:45	5:15
Zohr	12:45	1:15
Asr	4:45	5:00
Maghrib	6:12	6:17
Esha	8:00	8:30

Source: Islamic Foundation



United States synchronised diving team Jenny Keim (L) and Laura Wilkinson perform on the 10m platform during training at the Sydney International Aquatics Centre yesterday in preparation for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. The Games begin September 15. - AFP photo

Koreas to march as unified team at Olympic opening

SYDNEY, Sept 10: North and South Korea will march as one team at the Olympic opening ceremony on Friday in one of the most powerful symbols yet of the deepening rapprochement between them, reports AFP.

Under an accord brokered by International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Juan Antonio Samaranch, athletes from the two countries - who remain technically at war - will march behind a flag representing the entire Korean peninsula.

South Korea's Yonhap news agency said that both Koreas would be represented by around 180 athletes wearing

identical uniforms.

It will be the first time the two states, bitter enemies since the peninsula was divided into the communist north and capitalist south at the end of the 1950-53 Korean war, have marched together at an Olympics.

"The IOC is very pleased to announce an agreement has been reached between the national Olympic committees of South Korea and the (Democratic) People's Republic of North Korea," Samaranch said.

"I would like to thank the two national Olympic committees. I think this is very good news for sport," he told IOC

members.

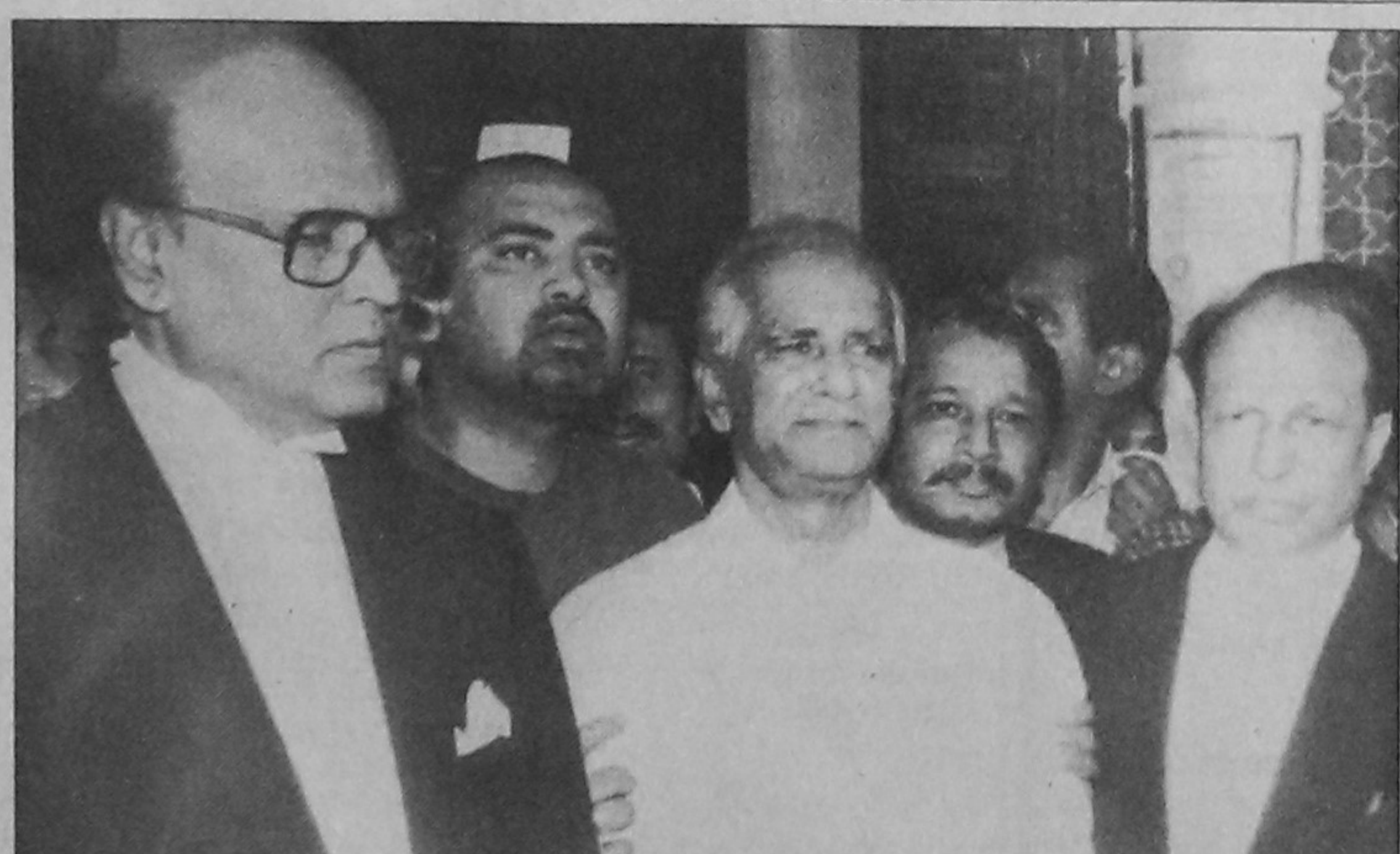
"This is a very important gesture showing to all the world the will of the two Koreas," said Samaranch, adding that there had been meetings over the past two or three days and it had been decided that there would be one flag, but two athletes carrying it.

"They will march here as a unified team," added the IOC chief.

South Korean IOC member Kim Un-Young said that it was a significant contribution to inter-Korean reconciliation.

Kim confirmed that the flag they will carry shows all the

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Jatiya Party (Ershad) leader Jahangir Mohammad Adel (middle) appeared before the High Court yesterday to seek bail. Adel is facing sedition charge for hoisting Pakistan's national flag atop his residence on August 14. - Star photo

BNP likely to expel Akhtar

By Staff Correspondent

BNP is likely to expel its dissident leader Akhtaruzzaman MP, sources said.

The BNP Standing Committee at an emergency meeting on September 5 suspended primary membership of Akhtaruzzaman for violating party discipline and acting against its interest.

Akhtar, a retired Major, ignoring a show-cause notice issued on him on September 5 and alone took part in the parliament proceedings yesterday despite repeated warning by the party hierarchy.

Party sources said Akhtar had been suspended and served with show-cause notices four times on charge of carrying out activities that embarrassed his party.

"A process has already been started within the party to take punitive action against the MP as demand for expelling Akhtaruzzaman is being raised from all levels of the party. A number of MPs at a parliamentary party meeting of BNP on Saturday also demanded immediate expulsion of the dissident MP," said a senior BNP leader.

LC identifies 10 reasons for delay in trial of cases

By Staff Correspondent

The Law Commission has identified excessive load of cases, lack of sincerity of judges and cooperation from lawyers, absence of skilled investigators and regular investigation into crimes and weakness in the legal system as among the 10 reasons for delay in the trial of cases in lower courts.

The other reasons include absence of specialised courts, effective supervision of the judicial system and logistics for the judges, the Commission said in its annual report for 1998, placed in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

The report said that due to unusual delay in the disposal of cases, getting justice had become something absurd. Such delay was making trial expensive and justice impossible.

"As a result, people are losing confidence in the judiciary and foreign investments are being badly affected," the commission said, adding that there was no option to expediting the process of trial to make the judicial system meaningful to the people.

In the past, initiative was taken more than once to ensure speedy trial but none of those

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Accountability & transparency 2 pillars of good governance

President tells int'l confce in city

By Staff Correspondent

President Shahabuddin Ahmed has said accountability and transparency are the two pillars of good governance which is a precondition for sustained social and economic development of a country.

"We have not inherited an administrative system with strong oversight functions by responsible institutions either in the discharge of public duties or expenditure of funds from the public coffers," the President said.

He was inaugurating a three-day international confer-

ence on "Improving Oversight Function: Challenges in the New Millennium" in the city yesterday.

For relatively new democracies like Bangladesh, improvement of oversight functions of the institutions responsible for it is key to good governance and improvement of quality of life of their peoples, he said.

The conference, held at Hotel Sonargaon, was organised by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) in cooperation with UNDP and World Bank.

Finance Minister S A M S Kibria addressed the session as special guest.

The inaugural session was also addressed by, among others, Chairman of Public Accounts Committee S M Akram MP, Comptroller and Auditor General Syed Yusuf Hossain, Country Director of World Bank Frederick T Temple, Acting Regional Financial Management Advisor of World Bank John Anthony Fitzsimon, Resident Representative UNDP Jorgen Lissner and Paul Ackroyd head

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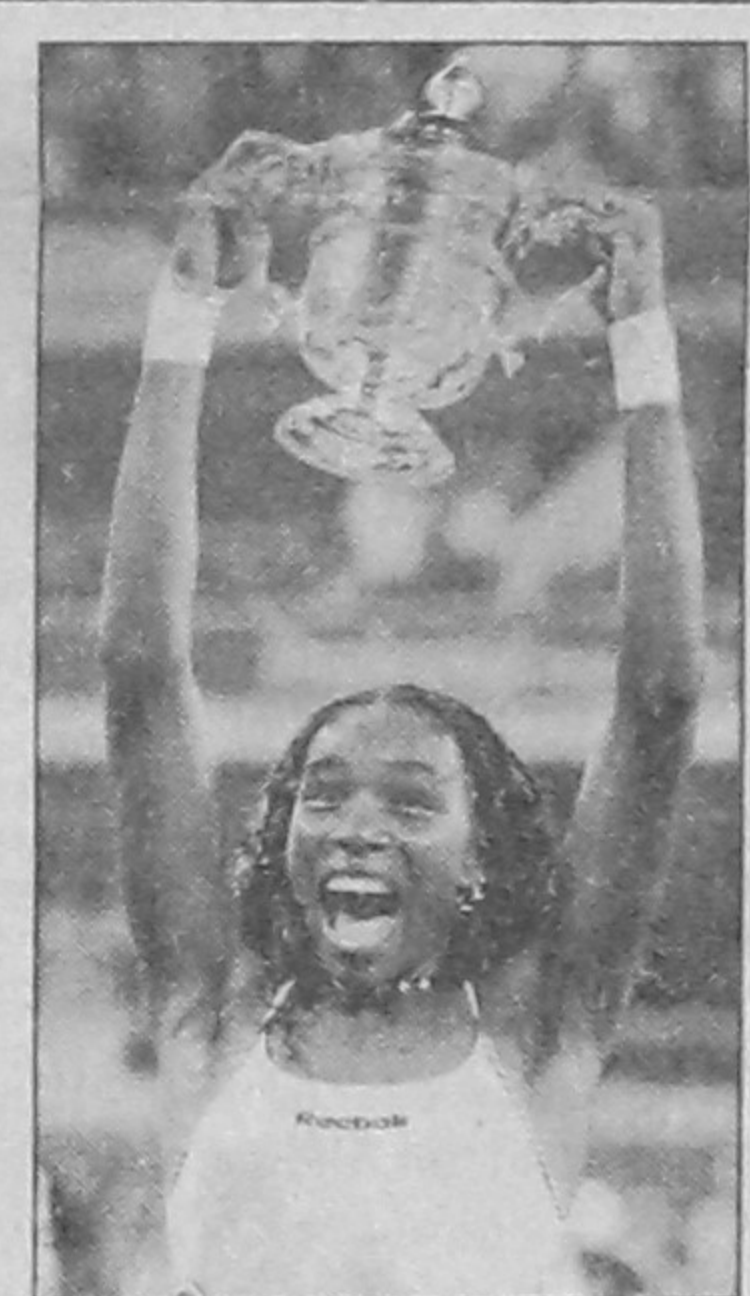
Venus Williams lifts US Open

NEW YORK, Sept 10: A glittery tiara in her hair and mienace in her strokes, Venus Williams tightened the family grip on women's tennis Saturday night, capturing the US Open title her sister won a year ago, reports AP.

Two months after beating Lindsay Davenport at Wimbledon for her first Grand Slam title, Williams confirmed her place as the best in the game, if not in the rankings, by beating Davenport again 6-4, 7-5 in the hardest-hitting women's final in US Open history.

Never before had two women's finalists walloped shots so fiercely, so consistently, from both sides as Williams and Davenport in this rain-delayed, 1-hour, 25-

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Venus Williams.

Airbus purchase case: Former Biman MD, DGM granted bail

By Court Correspondent

The District and Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka yesterday granted bail to two accused in a Tk 175 crore graft charge relating to purchase of two air-

buses. Judge Abdul Matin granted bail to Ahabab Ahmed, former MD of Biman and Zamir Ahmed, Deputy GM of the airlines against a bond for Tk five lakh each.

The accused appeared before the court at 10:30 am.

Barrister Akter Imam, Advocate Kalimullah Majumder and Advocate Anwar Ansari yesterday prayed for bail while Metropolitan PP Quamrul Islam op-

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Move for secret deal on gas export will be thwarted

Khaleda tells British Home Secretary

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday said people of the country would thwart any government move to seal any secret deal with India for exporting gas.

She told the British Secretary of State for Home Affairs (Home Minister) Jack Straw that speculations are ripe that the government is going for secret arrangement to export gas to India.

During the meeting, held at 29 Minto Road in the city that

lasted about 40 minutes, Khaleda and Straw discussed the country's latest political developments, law and order, democratic and human rights situation and matters of mutual interest.

Briefing newsmen, BNP Chairperson's Advisory Council member MM Rezaul Karim said Khaleda on a query of the minister about BNP's views on export of gas to India said that it was necessary to know in the first place the country's actual

gas reserves before thinking of exporting it.

She told Straw that BNP won't object to any move to export gas only if the present and future domestic demand is taken care of and if it proves to be profitable to the nation. Moreover, gas-based industries need to be set up in the country before considering the export option.

The opposition leader also said that the previous BNP gov-

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Adel decides to stay within SC bldg

By Staff Correspondent

Jahangir Mohammad Adel who is facing a sedition charge said yesterday he would spend the night at the Supreme Court building as his bail prayer could not be heard by the High Court for time constraint.

Police remained deployed around the Supreme Court building and in front of the chamber of Adel's lawyer on its premises.

Adel, his two sons, some of their relatives and two junior lawyers were staying at the chamber of his lawyer Khondker Mahbub Hossain, one of his sons told this correspondent at 10:30 last night.

"My client will remain in the High Court till the petition is accepted or rejected," said Hossain adding that his client had already surrendered before the

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UK may change work permit rules in certain sectors

By Special Correspondent



Jack Straw

British Home Secretary Jack Straw has said Britain is considering change in immigration rules to enable skilled people of different categories work in this country.

"We announced fresh rules for entrepreneurs. Previously people investing one million pounds could get work permits. Now new policies have been initiated for set jobs," he told a press conference before leaving Dhaka yesterday at the end of a two-day visit to Bangladesh.

High Commissioner David Carter was also present at the press conference held the High Commission.

Straw said his colleague Barbara Roach would initiate debate on change in work permit rules in certain sectors to allow skilled people work in

Britain. Immigrants including an estimated 300,000 from Bangladesh have contributed a lot to Britain, he pointed out.

But he said that his country would continue tough policies regarding illegal immigrants from different corners of the world, who try to get into Britain through deception.

"Every time a Bangladeshi tries that, it makes difficult for others," he said. However, the rate of granting of visit visa by the British High Commission in Dhaka is quite good, some 75 per cent of the applications are approved on an average. Granting of other categories of visa like that for reunion of families are also satisfactory, he added.

The Home Secretary further

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