

Down to Earth

Environmental Perils in City Life

By A S M Nurunnabi

Of late environmental issues have assumed great importance the world over. One aspect of environmental degradation relates to big cities. Around the world more than one billion people live in cities where the air quality does not meet the World Health Organisation (WHO) standards. Mexico City, Bangkok, Calcutta, New Delhi and Tehran — all have reportedly pollution levels higher than WHO standards. According to a World Bank report, the level of environmental degradation in East and South Asia rapidly approaching thresholds of unacceptably high social and economic costs.

In a poor developing country like ours, there is a compulsive need to adopt policies which encourage dependence on mechanical transports resulting in gradual but certain environmental degradation. According to a recent study, if the air quality in cities was brought within standards, between 300,000 and 70,000 premature deaths could be avoided, but in a developing country the city's transportation system will remain a top priority of government with its pollution, and there is no escape from it on account of development needs.

The pollution caused by the Dhaka city's transportation system is a cause of great concern for us at the moment. With the steady growth of motor traffic on the roads in the city, the threat from pollution keeps on increasing at an alarming rate.

A recent survey conducted with Asian Development Bank's help of 900 vehicles is understood to have shown that about 86 per cent buses, 90 per cent trucks, 80 per cent auto tempes, 93 per cent jeeps and 82 per cent microbuses emit poisonous exhausts. According to another survey conducted by the Department of Environment, commercial vehicles are the worst offenders in this

respect. The vast numbers of these vehicles which in many cases possess no fitness certificate regarding poisonous exhausts give a clue to the enormity of the problem of smoke pollution facing the city.

Strangely enough, the rickshaw is being seen today as one of the most environmentally kindest vehicles on the road and it is understood that similar forms of transport are being encouraged in several countries around the world, the emphasis being more on developing a sustainable form of transportation which will not pollute the atmosphere. In this perspective, some suggest that we shy away from policies which encourage additional motorised vehicles with billowing black smoke.

But this will not be realistic for a developing country inasmuch as it may look like cutting the head to cure headache. The practicable steps in the present situation appear to be the necessity for the concerned authorities to be punctilious, while giving fitness certificate to a vehicle, in ensuring that its exhaust system is in order. The prime need of the hour is the constant vigilance and commitment of the concerned authorities to tackle smoke pollution for the betterment of environment and the preservation of public health.

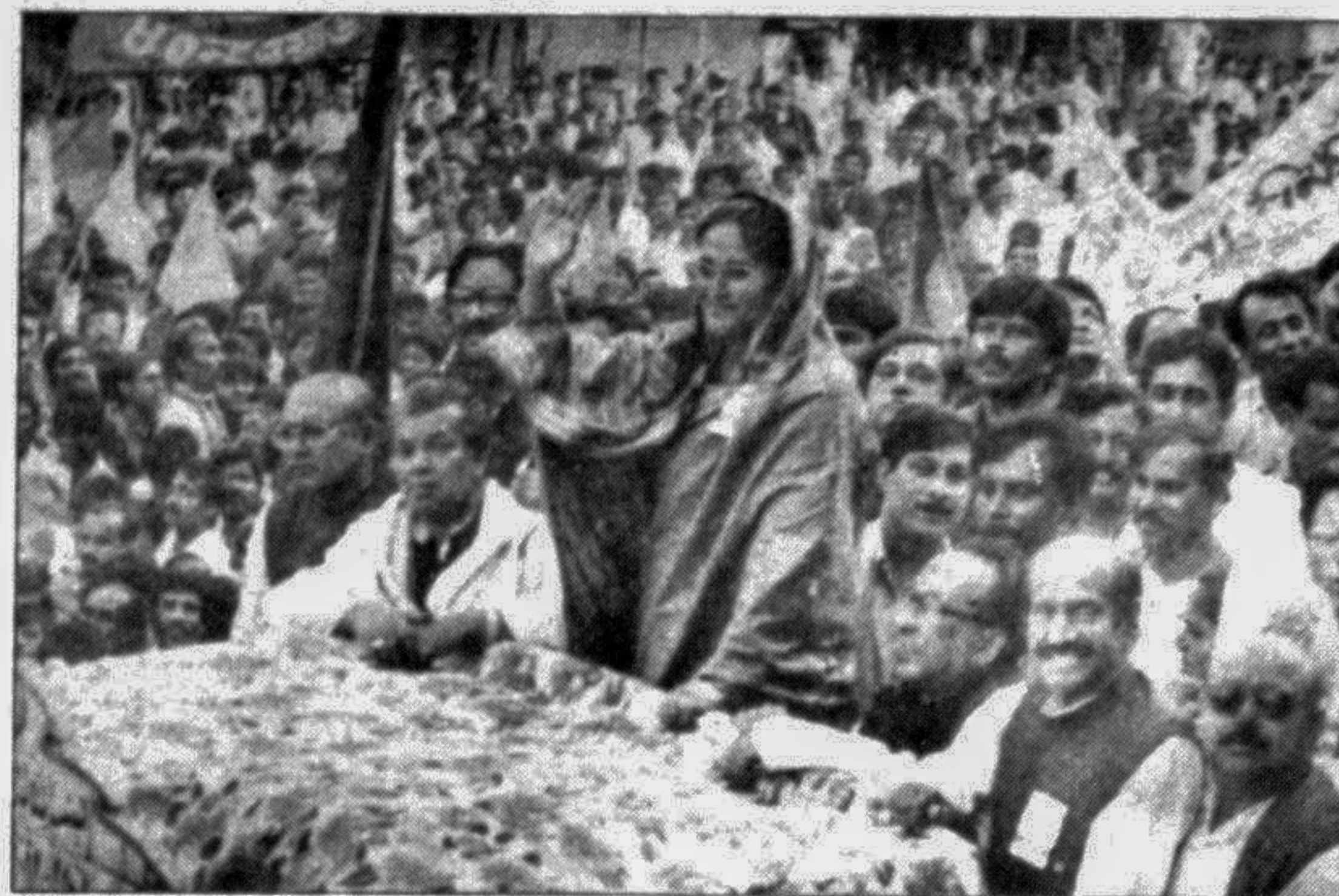
The problem of smoke pollution from the source of industries has not reached an alarming state in general except in some isolated pockets, as opined by knowledgeable sources.

Another aspect of environmental degradation is noise pollution. Among the factors responsible are: lack of proper planning in urban growth, existence of noise creating industries and enterprises in areas mostly residential and recreational in character within city limits and absence

of awareness among city dwellers of the consequences stemming from constant exposure to noisy environment. A state of utter confusion prevails in the field of environmental acoustics. For lack of proper zoning of growth activities into specific areas like residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, etc, we find an intermingling of a number of disparate entities in a given area. In a large city noise, of course, is a characteristic feature. What is deplorable is the lack of effective measures to control or decrease the level of urban noise. In our Penal Code there are provisions for prevention of public nuisance which term includes nuisance on account of creation of excessive noise in any locality. The Department of Environment has also made provisions under law for protection of environment which cover provisions against noise pollution also. But the sad part of the situation is that there are obvious signs of indifference on the part of the concerned authorities to check the growing menace.

The burgeoning process of urbanisation has claimed, among its victims, the cruel denudation of trees in many areas of the city. This is inevitably leading to environmental degradation. There is, therefore, necessity for intensifying drive for greening city areas as a means of achieving environmental upgradation. The plantation drive that is undertaken from time to time should be turned into a mass movement for maintaining ecological balance not only of the city but also of the entire country.

We have thus in the city environmental problems which appear to be growing steadily. The extent of urban decay on this account is so widespread that none with a minimum power of observation can miss it.



Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina leading a procession in the city Thursday on the occasion of the Victory Day (top), and the BNP Dhaka city unit procession on the Victory Day (above)

Spirit of Liberation War

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shad stormed into the milieu, chanting 'Ershad... Ershad'. They laid wreaths on behalf of the Jatiya Party at around 10 am.

Leaders of different political parties including JSD (Inu), Gano Forum, 10 left-leaning parties, Ganatantri Party, BSD (Khaleque), BSD (Mahbub), Workers Party, Jatiya Janata Party, CPB, NAP (Mozaffar), NAP (Bhassani), JSD (Rab), Krishak Samik Shamyabadi Dal, Gano Azadi League, NDP, Jagpa, Rupantorito Communist Party, Janata Dal, Ganatantri Biplobi Jote, Islamic Biplobi Andolon and others also placed wreaths at the national mausoleum.

The Vice Chancellors of Dhaka, and Jahangirnagar universities and BUET paid homage to the martyrs on behalf of their respective universities. The teachers' associations of the three universities also paid tributes to the war heroes.

The other organisations which placed wreaths at the memorial were: Muktiyoddha Sangsad and its different chapters, DUCSU, EUCSU, Projanma '71, Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee, all the hall student unions of the universities of Dhaka, Jahangirnagar and BUET, JASAS, Zia Parishad, Zia Sangskritik

Sangstha, Mahila Parishad, Bangladesh Chhatra League (M-1), Bangla Academy, Shilpakala Academy, Awami Mahila League, Awami Juba League, Udichi Shilpi Goshthi, Khe-laghar Asar, Bangladesh Medical Association, ADAB, Dhaka Medical College Teachers' Association and Students' Union, Anjibi Samannaya Parishad, BCS (admn) Association, Employees Associations of BRTC, BIWTC, BIWTA, and different banks, Sandhani, Palli Biddut Samity, Jahangirnagar Theatre, Nazrul Institute, Caritas and others.

The largest wreath, made in the shape of a blooming flower, was placed by the war injured freedom fighters and the family members of the martyred freedom fighters. The injured heroes, in wheel chairs, also offered munajat at the memorial.

The Deputy Chief of Staff during the Independence War, Air Vice Marshal (ret'd) A K Khandaker accompanied by other sector commanders of the war, laid wreaths.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury paid tributes to the martyred policemen at the Rajarbagh Police Line Shaheed Smriti Memorial. He was accompanied by Home Secretary Azimuddin Ahmed, Inspector General of Police A S M Shah-jahan and other police officials.

Earlier, the Prime Minister, along with her party colleagues, went to the mazar of the late President Ziaur Rahman and offered munajat.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia inspecting the juvenile rally at the Mirpur Stadium on the Victory Day Thursday.

PM: Investment

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Ishkandar Ali and general secretary Nazrul Islam Khan were also present.

Begum Zia said that the present government had been putting in relentless efforts to further improve the investment climate in the country.

"More investment means more industries, more industries mean more employment opportunities and more jobs mean more income," she told the labour leaders and asked them to help further improve the investment climate.

Begum Zia sharply criticised the ousted Ershad regime for ruining the country's industries and the banks

Varsity officers

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structure and inclusion of officers' representatives to the university Senate, Syndicate, Finance Committee and Academic Council in all universities of the country.

The leaders of Bangladesh Inter University Officers' Federation at a press conference yesterday said that a high-powered committee of the government had already recommended implementation of its demands.

But the demands have not yet been fulfilled, the leaders of the federations stated at the conference held at the Teachers Students Centre (TSC) of the Dhaka University yesterday afternoon.

Ahmadiyyas

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against the Quadianis and demanding the government ban their activities.

A poster printed and distributed by the Majlis said that President Abdur Rahman Biswas would inaugurate the congregation, to be attended by religious leaders from the Islamic countries.

When contracted, a reliable source in the President's Secretariat, however, said that there was no such programme in the President's schedule in the coming week.

Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury told the Daily Star that he would look into the matter.

The Midnight File

Two US planes crash in midair collision

TOKYO, Dec 17: Two US Marine Corps FA-18 jet fighters crashed into the Pacific Ocean after colliding in midair off Okinawa in southwestern Japan, US military authorities said Friday. The accident occurred at 10:25 am (0125 GMT) between 130 and 150 miles (200 and 240 kilometers) southeast of Kadena Air Base on Okinawa while the aircraft from Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 115 were on a routine training mission, the air base said, reports AP.

Anura Bandaranaike sworn in as Minister

COLOMBO, Dec 17: The son of Sri Lanka's parliamentary opposition leader was sworn in as a government minister today, a statement from the president's office said. Anura Bandaranaike, whose mother Sirima heads the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) which was founded by his father Solomon, was appointed Higher Education Minister, reports Reuters.

Clinton names Inman as Defence Secy

WASHINGTON, Dec 17: President Bill Clinton named retired Navy Admiral Bobby Inman as US Defence Secretary Thursday, replacing Les Aspin who resigned Wednesday, reports AP.

Inman, 62, a former deputy chief of the central intelligence agency who retired from active service in 1982, was one of the country's most respected military officers, said Clinton as he announced the nomination outside the White House flanked by Inman and Aspin.

Prokrichi

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On the question of holding another round of talks, the Prokrichi leaders informed the cabinet committee that they would meet again only after discussing the proposals of the government with the members of the Prokrichi and BCS cadre, Matin said.

Some 70 thousands doctors, engineers, agriculturists and members of the 26 BCS cadre are now campaigning to press home their 17-point charter of demands.

Prominent among their demands are: overhauling the present bureaucracy, removing service anomalies, formulating the Rules of Business and separation of the judiciary from the administration.

The professionals, as part of their campaign, had observed a three-day mass leave which ended on Monday.

The also started their second-phase of programme by signing resignation letters en masse since Wednesday.

TV centre to be set up in Rajshahi

RAJSHAHI, Dec 17: The government has decided to set up a television centre in Rajshahi adjacent to the radio station on about four-acre land, reports BSS.

Information Minister Barister Nazmul Huda is likely to lay the foundation stone of the television centre tomorrow.

Dainik Barta to reappear in Jan

RAJSHAHI, Dec 17: The Dainik Barta will resume its publication from Rajshahi by the third week of January, reports BSS.

The paper will fulfil the long felt demand of the people of the regions.

Hasina

From Page 1 Col 7

sion on the opposition parties. She demanded release of the Awami League workers arrested under the Anti-Terrorism Act throughout the country.

Referring to the Joint Declaration of the three alliances and the four-point agreement in parliament, she said BNP had broken its promises by not implementing the agreement and its pre-election pledges.

The Awami League President said although her party is in the opposition, it has been able to establish the parliamentary system of democracy and also forced government to waive the agri-loans upto Tk 5,000. In this context, she demanded exemption of agri-loans of the cooperative farmers.

SAF teams

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Sports at the International Olympic Committee will also attend the games on behalf of its President Juan Antonio Samaranch.

Pakistan's contingent comprising 167 members, and a 23-member Sri Lankan squad and a 5-member Maldives team reached here Thursday to participate in the 8-day sports carnival.

Four members of Pakistani tennis team will join their contingent in a day or two.

The Indian team so far the largest contingent in the ensuing SAF Games, will arrive here today in two groups, one from New Delhi and the another from Calcutta.

India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka will participate in all 11 disciplines of the Games.

Three arrested for murder

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 17: Three persons were arrested in connection with the killing of two BCL activists on December 14 by armed terrorists at Panchkain, under Raozan thana of Chittagong.

Meanwhile, with tension still high in Raozan since the killing, a large number of police have been deployed there to prevent any outbreak of violence.

A case was filed with Raozan thana accusing 36 persons belonging to the National Democratic Party (NDP) of their involvement in the murder.

Benazir kisses Nusrat

KARACHI (Pakistan), Dec 17: Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto reached out to her estranged mother, Nusrat, with a kiss today to try to end a feud that divides Pakistan's first family and threatens to split the ruling party, reports Reuters.

However, Nusrat hinted later that the simmering dispute between the two women over leadership of the ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP) was not yet over.

BRI

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the new deep-water breed, the farmers can make use of their lands twice a year, thus increasing production, agriculturists said.

As the new deep-water variety comes into use, the losses due to floods will be minimised and there would be no need for erecting embankments to save the crops, some agriculturists feel.

The new deep-water variety will be sent to the Seed Board next year for approval for commercial use.

In addition, the BRI is now working on a salinity resistant variety by crossing rice with 'uri' — a rice-like crop grown in the southern region of the country, especially in the char on accreted lands.

"This research is quite critical because 'uri' is a completely different genus from rice and we are trying to cross them," Miah said.

About one million hectares of land in the southern part of the country are saline. The new variety, if successful, would benefit farmers in those areas, sources said.

The fast expansion of shrimp farming in the southern part has recently increased the soil salinity and the rice farmers get lower yields as a result.

SOSB congress

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Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf said going for treatment abroad has become a fashion in the country. "It's a psychological weakness of patients," he said.

The Minister called upon the country's surgeons to help build up patient's confidence on the physicians.

On bottlenecks to the approval of different projects in the health sector, he said the bureaucratic tangles should be removed for the improvement of the health sector. "It's time to get rid of all kinds of bureaucratic tangles."

In his presidential address, SOSB President Prof Kabiruddin said many difficult and specialised operations like kidney transfer, brain tumour surgery and open heart surgery were being done in the country with success. Laparoscopic surgery and Extracorporeal shock wave have been introduced in the country.

He, however, regretted that import of necessary equipment for the treatment of such diseases have been made 'prohibitively expensive' due to taxation.

The SOSB President demanded speedy implementation of the proposed medical university in the country to give autonomy to the medical education.

Later, President Biswas presented the Asir Memorial Medal to Dr Muhammad Abdul Matin of the IPGMR for his paper, "Carcinogenesis and Anomalous Pancreaticobiliary Ducts: Experimental and Clinical Study from the Aspect of DNA Analysis".

Five murdered in 2 days

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Akhter, who was reportedly doused with kerosene and burned by her neighbours at Bhashantek, Cantonment, on Tuesday, died in the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) early Thursday.

The victim's mother Gulenur Begum blamed her neighbour Minu Roy and her daughter Rita for the killing, said police adding that Yeasmin had an affair with Minu's son Poresh.

In another incident, a 14-year-old girl Sameema who was repeatedly raped and tortured at Demra died in the DMCH early Thursday.

Sameema's father Shamsu Malik told Demra police that her daughter was missing for the last two weeks.

A 16-year-old boy was stabbed to death at Hazaribagh following dispute over a badminton match yesterday afternoon.

US pullout from Somalia begins

MOGADISHU, Dec 17: The United States began pulling combat troops out of Somalia today as a step towards total withdrawal by the end of next March, reports Reuters.

AL V-Day procession

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and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, led her party's march standing on a bedecked lorry. Several central party leaders were flanked her.

The procession started 3:45 pm from the Bangabandhu Avenue and culminated at Bangabandhu Bhaban, at the Dhanmondi Residential Area.

A smiling Hasina waved at the curious onlookers and conveyed Victory Day greetings to hundreds of men and women standing on both sides of the streets. Several thousands AL activists and supporters, a large number of them on trucks and buses, took part in the procession.

The marchers carried miniature national flags, party flags and portraits of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Sheikh Hasina. They also chanted slogans against the government and the Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh.

The processionists enacted scenes of both the Pakistani army's atrocities against the people and the capture of small groups of occupation soldiers by the freedom fighters during the Liberation War.

In one mobile show, a woman was seen thrashing a

The victim, Hossain Ahmed Shameem, was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) at 3:30 pm and died after an hour.

Bellal, 35, was murdered at Jagannath Saha Road at Lalbagh last Thursday night. Relatives said that some people called him out from his residence at around 10:30 pm on the same night but he did not return home. Later he was found dead, they added.

Lalbagh police said that one Majumdar — a grocer — was stabbed Tuesday night who died at the DMCH in the morning on December 16.

Police arrested one Manik for his alleged involvement in the murder.

BCL-JCD clash in Ctg: 15 hurt

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 17: At least 15 persons were reportedly injured on Wednesday midnight in Lalkhan Bazar area of the city during a clash between two groups of BCL and JCD activists over the placing of wreaths at the Shaheed Minar.

Police resorted to lathicharges to disperse them and brought the situation under control.

'razakar' (collaborator) with a broom after the freedom fighters had foiled the razakar's attempt to rape the lady.

More than fifty trucks and buses carried the AL supporters.

Party leaders Zillur Rahman, Amir Hossain Anu, Tofael Ahmed, Rahmat Ali, Mohammad Nasim, Begum Matia Chowdhury and others accompanied Sheikh Hasina on the open lorry. In a brief speech at the Bangabandhu Bhaban, Hasina thanked the party activists for making the victory march a grand success.

The colourful procession of the Sangskritik Jote, which started from the Central Shaheed Minar in the city, ended at the Dhaka University campus.

Hundreds of cultural activists were heard chanting slogans demanding a ban on religion-based politics and trial of Jamaat chief Golem Azam as a 'war criminal'.

In addition to these two big ones, several other organisations — both political and cultural — brought out innumerable processions to mark the Victory Day in the city.



Ahsan Ahmed Ashak dead

Ahsan Ahmed Ashak, honorary treasurer of the Diabetic Association of Bangladesh and former Managing Editor and General Manager of the New Nation and the Dainik Bangla, died of a heart attack here yesterday morning. He was 75, reports BSS.

He was son of late Khan Bahadur Abdul Muktar of Banashkhali under Chittagong district.

He left behind his wife, two sons, three daughters and a host of friends and relatives to mourn his death.

His namaz-e-janaza was held at the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque after Asr prayers and was buried at the Banani graveyard.

His qul khawari will be held on tomorrow (Sunday) after Asr prayers at his Eskatan residence.

City BNP holds V-Day rally

By Staff Correspondent

The Dhaka city BNP held a rally and brought out a procession to mark the Victory Day Thursday.

The speakers at the rally urged the nationalist forces to resist unitedly all conspirators against democracy.

City BNP president and Food Minister Mir Shawkat Ali led the procession which started from the Naya Paltan BNP central office and ended at the Jatiya Press Club.

BNP joint secretary general and Energy Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, State Minister for Shipping Harun Al-Rashid, Mayor Mirza Abbas, Salahuddin Ahmed, MP and city BNP leaders were present on the occasion.

The Energy Minister addressing the post-procession rally in front of the Press Club warned of a particular quarter conspiring against the stability of the country.

He also recalled the contributions of the late President Ziaur Rahman to the Liberation War and the sacrifices of the martyrs.

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