

The Midnight File

20 killed in Brazilian blast

VITORIA, Brazil, July 1: An explosion ripped through three fireworks stores in a marketplace in the southeast town of Vitoria today killing at least 20 people, officials said. Firefighters were called out to extinguish the blaze which was threatening to engulf the entire Vila Rubim Market, reports AFP.

Mosque bombing: Several arrested in Iran

NICOSIA, July 1: Iranian authorities have arrested several alleged members of the exiled Mujahedeen opposition group in connection with a mosque bombing that killed 26 people, the state-run media reported Friday. Warrants have been issued for more arrests. Ali Akbar Lasaqi, deputy prosecutor of the northeastern city of Mashhad, where the June 20 bombing took place, told Islamic Republic News Agency, reports AP.

Arafat returns to Gaza

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The Palestinian self-rule areas.
der by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak Egypt was the first Arab nation to make peace with Israel.
Arafat has been condemned by some former Muslim fundamentalist fighters for striking an accord with Israel. But Palestinians in Gaza laid out a hero's welcome amid extremely tight security.
Gaza City was decked in flags and music blared from loudspeakers. Palestinian flags — once banned by Israeli authorities — hung from trees and balconies. Merchants painted storefronts white along Arafat's expected route.
Arafat's return to Gaza was a triumph for him and his movement. He had been in exile since 1987.
Asked why Arafat chose to go first to Gaza and not to Jericho, the dusty backwater that is the seat of the self-rule government, Shaath said the PLO leader wanted to greet as many of his people as possible.
"Jericho is the symbol. Gaza is the reality," Shaath said. "It's where a million people are. I think it's very important that he go into a sea of people first and then the seat of symbols."
Meanwhile, the White House hailed Arafat's return to the Gaza strip today as an important step toward further Palestinian self-rule.

Asked his feelings on returning from 27 years of exile, Arafat recalled his last time in Palestinian territory before fleeing from the Israelis in 1967.
"You have to remember that the last time I left, I was there in Palestine secretly," he said in Cairo, Egypt, before heading for the border. "I entered secretly and I left secretly. Now I am returning to the first free Palestinian land. You have to imagine how it is moving my heart, my feelings."
Nabil Shaath, the chief PLO peace negotiator, said Arafat would stay in Gaza for four days, then travel to Paris before moving permanently to

Herzog takes oath as FRG president
BERLIN, July 1: Roman Herzog succeeded Richard Von Weizsaecker as President of Germany today when he took the oath of office before both Houses of Parliament in the historic Reichstag building, reports Reuter.
Herzog was until today Chief Justice of Germany's Constitutional Court. As the successor to the popular Von Weizsaecker, Herzog becomes the nation's seventh post-War president.
Herzog, 60, was elected in May

Govt used police to protect enemies of Islam: Nizami
Jamaat-e-Islami leader Maulana Nizami MP yesterday warned the country's anti-Islamic elements of continued agitation by the religious minded people unless they mend their ways or until they are eliminated, reports UNB.
Addressing a protest rally at the north gate of Baitul Mukarram yesterday afternoon, Nizami said the successful haral on Thursday was the spontaneous reaction of the peace-loving, religious-minded people against the anti-Islamic forces.
He criticised police action during hartal hours and said the government used police against Muslims to protect the enemies of Islam.
The Jamaat secretary general also blamed the government for "protecting those unleashing terrorism in the name of progressive politics but hatching conspiracy against Islam."

New envoy to Japan soon
By Staff Correspondent
Dhaka will shortly name a new ambassador to Japan to replace Mahbubul Huq, who has been recalled.
The new ambassador is likely to be selected from the business community with considerable entrepreneurial and marketing skill, according to sources.
The decision to replace Mahbubul Huq only a few months before his retirement, was taken reportedly because of his lack of initiatives in the economic front.
The Bangladesh Economic Minister in Tokyo was recalled earlier. Meanwhile, sources said 12 new Economic Counsellors would shortly be posted in diplomatic missions abroad.

Passbook system
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tem should be scrapped fully so that the importers can benefit from the liberalised forex market where good clients can get finer rates from efficient banks.
A high official of the Commerce Ministry told The Daily Star that the ministry was also in favour of scrapping the system because the customs authorities were effectively overseeing import situation.
The office of CCI&E and the Commerce Ministry recently held a number of meetings on the textile and pharmaceutical sectors regarding the passbook system and the meetings also felt the need for scrapping the system.
"But we have not yet come to any concrete decisions," the official said.
Meanwhile, bankers say the credit information bureau of the Bangladesh Bank and the commercial banks own credit control cells are adequately equipped to fight any default in the absence of passbook system.
"Existence of passbook system is depriving the clients specially the importers in getting finer rates and competitive service from the banks' counters. When exchange control department of the central bank is being apprised of any LC opening and credit clearance is being taken from different commercial banks before sanctioning and disbursing loans, the passbook system should be immediately scrapped," said a top official of a foreign bank.
"I have not come across any instance where the debt default has been curbed because of the system," he said in reply to a question.

BUET
From Page 1 Col 5
third, fourth and fifth years were demanding deferment of the examination dates on the grounds of the World Cup.
Earlier the examination schedule had been shifted to July 3 from June 22 because of the outbreak of the virus fever, the press release said.
The provosts of the halls, department chairpersons, deans of the faculties and even the vice-chancellor visited all residential halls and asked the students to attend the classes and told the students that the examination schedule would not be changed.
The BUET authorities observed that such activities of the students were affecting the academic session of the university.
"If the students continue boycott their classes, drastic action will be taken against them" the press release added.

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"If he had told me he had taken the drugs, he would not have been allowed to play," Ugalde told reporters. "It hurts me a lot because I know how hard he has trained."
After each World Cup game, two randomly selected players from each team give a urine sample which is divided into two. The "B" sample is only analysed if the "A" sample is positive.
Maradona joins family in Boston
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The Argentine superstar, excluded from the World Cup will no longer travel with the Argentina team.
They were due to arrive in Los Angeles today to prepare for their second-round match against Romania on Sunday.
Argentine delegation officials requested that the team's flight number and hotel arrangements be kept secret so they could prepare in peace.
Both the 33-year-old player's samples showed positive after analysis at the UCLA doping laboratory in California.
Meanwhile, Argentines blamed Thursday's 2-0 defeat by Bulgaria on the loss of Maradona and predicted a hard struggle ahead.
"Argentina lost a match there was no way it could lose," said former coach Cesar Luis Menotti, who led the side to victory in 1978. "We weren't good on the attack."
The crowds that normally gather in central Buenos Aires when Argentina win were

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Demonstrators holding snakes protest outside the office of the Bangladesh Deputy High Commissioner in Calcutta yesterday. They carried a banner alleging that recent fundamentalist attempts, to fan riots in India and Bangladesh through the Babri Mosque or Taslima Nasreen issues were instigated by the imperialist forces. — AFP photo

Dhaka seeks China's help to solve Ganges issue

Minister for Post and Telecommunications Tariqul Islam called on the Vice President of China Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CAFFC) Chen Hau Su at a hotel in Beijing yesterday, report agencies.
The minister discussed with him matters of mutual interests and how the CAFFC and the Bangladesh-China Friendship Society in Bangladesh can play effective roles in further strengthening Bangladesh-China relations.
During the discussion, Tariqul Islam also apprised the Chinese leader about the adverse effects on the environment in Bangladesh caused by the Farakka barrage.
He sought China's assistance for equitable solution of the Ganges water sharing issue in the light of friendly relations existing between China and India.
The CAFFC later hosted a luncheon in honour of the visiting Bangladesh minister. He led the Bangladesh delegation to the conference on "Strategies for Telecom Development" which was concluded Thursday in Beijing.
They also explored ways to enhance further the excellent

One hurt during hartal dies

From Our Correspondent
BRAHMANBARIA, July 1: Clashes during the hartal yesterday left one killed and three injured in Kasba thana under Brahmanbaria district.
Billal Hossain, 22, reportedly Jamaat activist, died at the Comilla Adhunik Hospital last night after he was admitted there in a serious condition.
Witnesses said, the clashes took place between fundamentalists and their rivals in front of the Kasba Biddut Office in the morning. Both the groups used hockey sticks and rods during the clashes that left four persons injured, Billal fatally.
The body of Billal was brought back to Kasba from Comilla this morning.

Smuggled spices worth Tk 1 cr seized

CHITTAGONG, July 1: Bangladesh Navy (BN) ship Tawheed, during a routine patrol on the night following Wednesday, seized a mechanised cargo boat and recovered smuggled spices worth about Taka one crore, reports BSS.
All of the eight crew of the boat were also arrested, an ISPR press release said today.
The navy ship nabbed the boat, MB Al-Khizir, from about five miles south of Kutubdia.

3 killed in Mymensingh road mishap

MYMENSINGH, July 1: Three people, including a woman and her daughter, were killed in a road accident at Katni in Fulpur thana on Mymensingh-Haluaughat road today, reports UNB.
Witnesses and police said a speeding bus ran over them while trying to save a motorcycle rider.
The victims were identified as: Kulsum Begum, 38, her daughter Helewa, 16, and a former UP member Hornuj Ali.

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Maradona's positive test for ephedrine and four other related drugs sparked the biggest crisis in the 64-year history of the World Cup, and FIFA, the governing body of the world's most popular sport, was left reeling.
Maradona told team doctor Ernesto Ugalde he had taken two medicines bought in Argentina, Decidex and Nafitizol, to combat an allergy. Ugalde said their effect would have been minimal.
Ugalde said he only found out that Maradona had taken the medicines after the dope test results came in as positive, forcing Argentina to withdraw their inspirational superstar from the World Cup finals.
"I first knew about it after the text came back positive and I asked him what he had taken," Ugalde said.
He said that it was clear Maradona had taken the two medicines in Argentina.
"In the doses he took it really produces very little physical benefit," he said.
Maradona had not been ill but had complained of a "minor allergy," Ugalde added.

Maradona denies wrongdoing

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He said he was in excellent physical condition.
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DOWN TO EARTH

City Rickshaw Pullers' Ways of Life

By A S M Nurunnabi

When we speak of the anarchic traffic situation in the Dhaka city, the teeming rickshaws are mostly blamed for it. Rickshaws are Dhaka's speciality. But the way they are proliferating, they are becoming a cause of our nightmare. According to the estimate of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), which takes care of rickshaws, their number in the city is about three and a half lakh, nearly four times higher than the licensed ones. Although the DCC reportedly stopped issuing new licences long ago, new arrivals enter the streets through spurious means. Every day their numbers are increasing and the city roads are becoming increasingly less and less traffic worthy.

Yet the stark reality is that in the context of our socio-economic milieu, they provide far too many jobs and support too many families. Against this backdrop, the men behind the vehicles form an important subject of study.

Recently a small survey was conducted in this behalf under the auspices of the Institute of Social Welfare and Research, Dhaka. The survey provides a glimpse of some of the salient features of the life pattern of city rickshaw pullers.

A description of the results on some of the aspects of their life is here attempted on the basis of the statistical data obtained.

Obviously the city rickshaw pullers constitute a substantial part of urban labour force. From the survey it appears that a higher percentage of the rickshaw pullers (about 49 per cent) belong to the age group ranging from 20 to 30 years. A small percentage of persons even of the age group 50-60 years was also found engaged in this profession mainly because in many such families, their adult sons were indifferent or negligent in looking after their parents. A major proportion of the members of their families (65 per cent) has been found to be illiterate and they were not engaged in any occupation.

An important fact that emerged from the survey is that a large proportion of the rickshaw pullers (40.75 per cent) possessed no licence.

1. It has been observed that

In most of the cases (80 per cent), the rickshaw pullers do not own their vehicles. In such cases, they plied vehicles owned by others on fixed payments mostly in half-day shifts. A majority of them (68 per cent) a tendency for saving on a daily basis and normally keep their savings with themselves.

A major proportion of them lived in kutcha houses. Smaller percentages of them earning higher income, (17 & 10 per cent) however lived in semi-pucca and pucca houses.

In their professional field, a majority of them (59 per cent) frequently fell victims to physical ailments and were subject to harassment by law-enforcing agencies. In solving their professional problems, 50 per cent of them wanted to remain united. A substantial part of them stated that they received support from the owners of their vehicles in case of financial difficulties. A good percentage of them (59 per cent) became members of trade unions and received help from them in case of need. A good percentage of them (48 per cent) cherished the dream of having their own vehicles in future.

On the basis of the data obtained during the survey, some pertinent recommendations were made, which include the following:

1. It has been observed that

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Knockout stage begins today

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England 44 years ago.
The Brazilians have looked the strongest of all the teams, their only blemish a 1-1 draw with Sweden in their group play finale.

The Americans also will be without defensive midfielder John Harkes, who picked up a second yellow card against the Romanians. That will hurt the defence, but the Americans may counter with Roy Wegerle, an offensive midfielder who after tearing up his knee in January in the English league has only been used as a substitute.

In any event, both Argentina and the tournament will have