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AL invites BNP for dialogue

By Nazmul Ashraf and Razul Ahmad

The ruling Awami League yesterday invited the major opposition BNP for a dialogue to resolve differences over various issues before the Jatiya Sangsad goes into winter session on November 2.

Awami League stalwart and Post and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim telephoned BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Opposition Chief Whip in the Jatiya Sangsad Khandaker Delwar Hossain and extended the invitation.

Talking to The Daily Star Nasim said that he had urged the BNP leaders to join the coming session of the JS and raise whatever issues they like.

"I extended invitation for a dialogue and they assured me of response after consultation with the party chief," said Nasim.

Both the BNP leaders confirmed that Nasim contacted them for a dialogue.

While contacted last night, Mannan Bhuiyan said he suggested a dialogue.

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Partial change in UP polls schedule

By Staff Correspondent

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday partially changed the schedule for the Union Parishad election which will begin on December 1.

According to the changed schedule, the date for submission of nomination papers is November 4. Scrutiny of the nomination papers will be held on November 5, an EC press release said.

Earlier, the date for submission of nomination papers was November 3 and that for scrutiny of November 4.

BCL observes strike at CU

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Oct 19: Classes were not held at Chittagong University for the second consecutive day today as a tense situation prevailed there, campus sources said.

A student strike was observed today at the university at the call of Chhatra League demanding punishment to the killers of Bakul and allotment of seats on the basis of merit and faculty, campus sources and police said.

Authorities of the university in a press release however claimed that classes were held in most of the departments despite poor presence of students.

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5 JU BCL leaders expelled

By DU Correspondent

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), student wing of ruling Awami League, has expelled five leaders of its Jahangirnagar University unit following an intra party clash.

President of BCL Enamul Haq Shamim told journalists at the office of the Dhaka University Journalists' Association yesterday that they were expelled for their involvement in an untoward incident on the JU campus on Saturday.

The expelled leaders are Khalid Hasan Biddut, Hasibul Haq, Shimul, Atikul Islam and Rafiqul Islam.

Two faction of the BCL clashed on the JU campus on Saturday leaving one of its activists injured.

The Daily Star
on the Internet
<http://www.dailystarnews.com>

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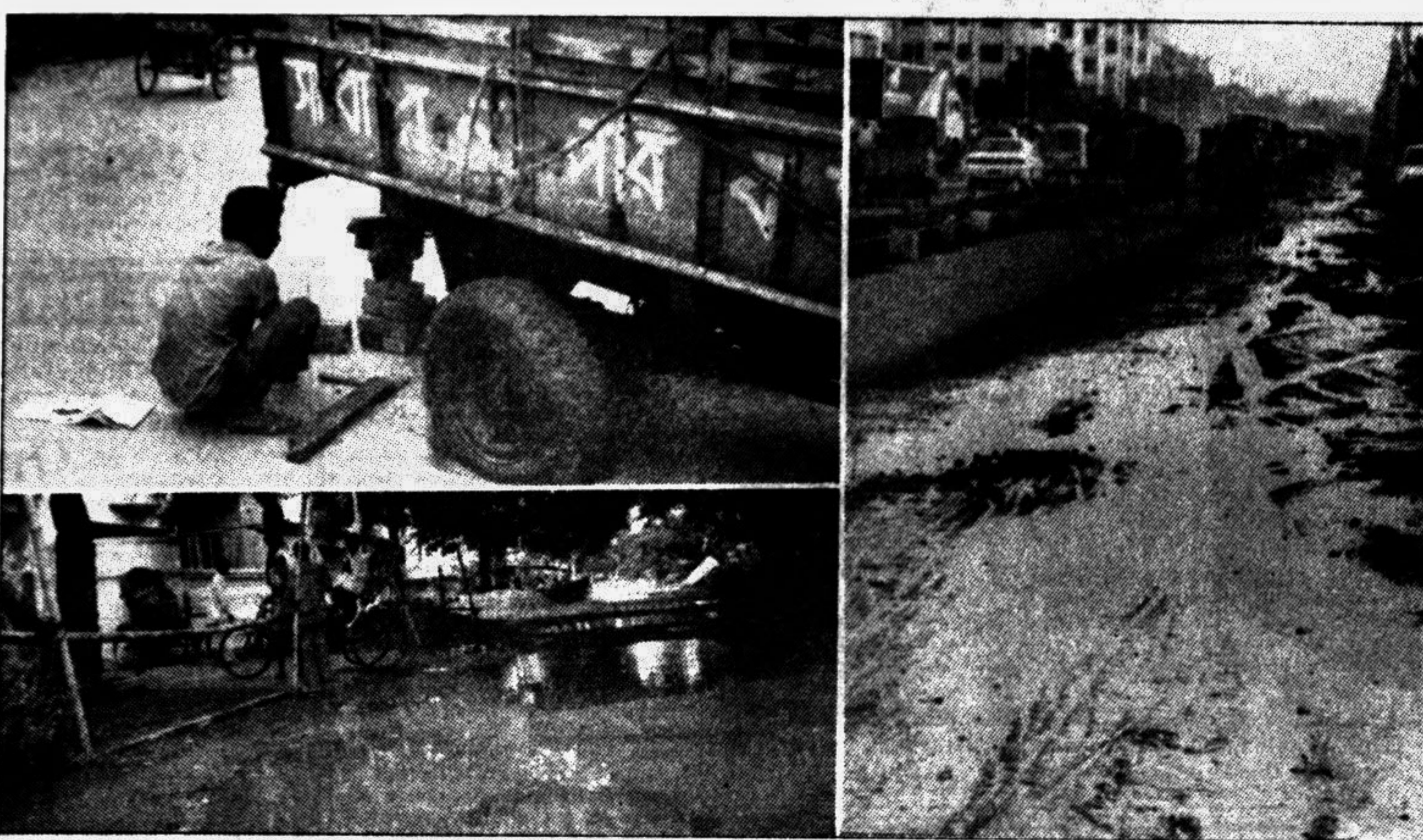
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Clockwise from right: A road in Dar-us-Salam area in Mirpur under stagnant sewage water. 'Ditches' on a road in Gulshan area. A truck stuck up on a city road with numerous potholes. — Star photo

NBR steps to stop evasion of duties by car importers

By Shehab Ahmed

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has directed customs officials to verify the production serial and year of manufacture of all reconditioned vehicles on the chassis to stop evasion of duties by a section of importers of used vehicles, according to sources in the NBR.

The order came in the wake of widespread malpractices by some unscrupulous importers of reconditioned cars who used doctored documents to change the vehicle's manufacture date, cheating the customs department and the buyers, to evade taxes and duties.

The Daily Star recently published a report on the issue. The NBR later conducted a probe which found gross irregularities in import of used vehicles, the sources said.

The NBR found evidence suggesting involvement of certain importers, clearing and forwarding agents and a section of customs and port officials in the irregularities.

The vehicles are taken to Dubai from Japan. The cancel-

lation of registration papers in Japan provides them eligibility for export as used cars. These documents in Dubai are replaced with cancellation certificates, written in Arabic language describing both the old and comparatively new vehicles as four to five years old.

Recent rises in taxes and duties have raised the prices of reconditioned vehicles, prompting the unscrupulous traders resorting to malpractices.

In recent times, buses and cars used for more than five years were brought in shiploads and cleared at an amazing pace to meet the demands for cheaper cars. Buyers also thought they were buying latest model vehicles at reasonable prices.

The demand grew so high that some vehicles were air-freighted from Dubai.

From now on, all the vehicles entering the ports would undergo checks on the basis of production code, serial number and year of manufacture in the 'silver book,' which enlists de-

tails for all vehicles produced in Japan, the principal source of reconditioned cars imported in Bangladesh.

The details are stenciled on the chassis, difficult to be tampered with or erased. The levies would be assessed on the basis of that and it would prevent the tendency to import more than five-year old vehicles or to declare one or two year old vehicles as five-year old ones.

In a circular sent to the Customs House in Chittagong on October 16, the NBR said that henceforth no vehicle would be released through the customs until the year and serial numbers quibbled on the chassis is checked.

The Chittagong Customs House has been asked to furnish a report by November 16, detailing its findings on the papers of cleared vehicles for the past one year.

Measures would be taken against the unscrupulous importers who had evaded duties and violated rules, a NBR source told the Star.

Indo-Bangla JWG meet begins in city

By Staff Correspondent

A two-day meeting of India-Bangladesh Joint Working Group (JWG) began in Dhaka yesterday to discuss cross-border insurgency, terrorism, smuggling and related issues between the two countries, according to official sources.

The meeting being held at the Conference Room of the Ministry of Home Affairs is also expected to discuss various aspects of Chakma repatriation and the ongoing move for a negotiated settlement of the Chittagong Hill Tracts issue.

M Pillai, Joint Secretary of the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs, is leading the eight-member Indian team at the two-day deliberations which are seen as very crucial.

Bangladesh side is led by Jambul Hui, Joint Secretary (Political) of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

High officials in the ministries of Home and Foreign Affairs said the JWG is discussing all border-related problems between the two countries.

This is the fourth meeting of the JWG. The Dhaka meet is the follow-up of the last JWG meeting held in New Delhi from January 28 to 31, one official said.

The JWG was reactivated at the Delhi meet after talks between Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the then

Farooq Sobhan Dhaka's candidate for C'wealth Secy Gen

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh has decided to nominate Farooq Sobhan as candidate for the post of Commonwealth Secretary General, according to well placed sources.

He would be contesting for the post to be vacated by Chief Emeka Anyakoku after completion of his second term shortly.

A career diplomat, Farooq Sobhan retired as the country's foreign secretary recently. He also served as envoy to Beijing and Delhi.

Sobhan would be accompanying Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to the forthcoming CHOGM meet in Edinburgh.

A likely contestant for the post would be Srinivasan, Deputy Secretary General of the Commonwealth.

PW-25 tells court

Maj Rashed Chy gunned down Serniabat

Major Rashed Chowdhury on August 15, 1975 brushed off the then minister Abdul Rab Serniabat twice moving his stungun from left to right and right to left while other officers followed him.

This was disclosed by the 25th prosecution witness in Bangabandhu murder case, Naik (ret'd) M Yasin, while making deposition to the trial court yesterday, reports UNB.

He further told the Dhaka District and Sessions Judge Court that a boy aged eight to 10 was standing beside Serniabat at that time and the bullets also struck him down.

Chief Special PP Serajul Haq and Special PP Ramjan Ali Khan introduced the PW-25 to the court.

Earlier, PW-24 Havildar (ret'd) Aminur Rahman was cross-examined by defence lawyers when the court of Judge Kazi Golam Rasul resumed in the morning.

Beginning his deposition, Naik (ret'd) M Yasin told the court that he was a sepoy at 2 Field Artillery at Dhaka Can-

tonment in the month of August in 1975.

Major Khandakar Abdul Rashid was Commanding Officer of the regiment which had four batteries — Headquarters, Papa, Cubec and Romeo.

The witness was in Cubec Battery of which Commander was Captain Jobayer Siddiqui. Major Muhiuddin was Commander of Papa Battery while Captain Mostafa of Headquarters.

"We had a night parade on August 14," Yasin said, adding CO Major Rashid asked them for road march after they fell in at the NT Park of the unit and were divided in different sections.

Captain Mostafa led the section where the PW was included and reached New Airport. At that time the troops were carrying personal arms but had no ammunition. "I had an SLR."

"Captain Mostafa saheb asked us to fall in there at about 3:30 am on August 15 and marching we reached in front of the office of Tank Bahini

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BNP pursuing politics of anarchy: Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

MOULVIBAZAR, Oct 19: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today charged the opposition BNP with pursuing 'politics of anarchy' causing people's suffering to take revenge for its electoral debacle, reports UNB.

"After being unseated in the face of mass movement and defeated in the election that followed, BNP is now patronising anarchy and confusing people when investors are coming in the country," she told a huge public meeting at Moulvibazar.

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tonment in the month of August in 1975.

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Govt violating human rights: Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday urged the human rights organisations to take initiative for chemical test of the tear gas shells used by police in recent days, reports UNB.

"This tear gas should be tested. It may contain something which is harmful for human health.... I myself fell victim to this tear gas last month and I felt it is dangerous," she said at a meeting with human rights activists.

A delegation of Bangladesh Human Rights Coordination Council met the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament at her 29 Minto Road official residence in the afternoon.

Begum Zia said the way police now fire tear gas shells on the opposition and the people is 'illegal'. She said many a men witnessed how police fired tear gas indiscriminately aiming at people and BNP activists.

Referring to press reports on death and torture in police custody, Begum Zia said the government is forcing the police to resort to inhuman torture on opposition activists after arrest.

She said the government in the name of democracy is violating fundamental and human rights throughout the country. Not only BNP men, innocent people are also becoming victims of violation of human rights.

She said though the ruling party unilaterally imposed a ban on holding meetings on the street it was also barring processions in the city. In this context, she mentioned that a procession is usually preceded and followed by gatherings.

BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said like other parties, BNP also does not want to hold public meetings on the street. It wants specific venues for meetings.

From this realisation, he said, during BNP regime, former Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury and Works

See Page 12 Col 6

The Daily Star stands by its reports

Our attention has been drawn to a public notice published by Beximco in a section of the press yesterday, in which it accuses The Daily Star and the Bhorer Kagoj of:

a) publishing stories distorting and exaggerating facts and giving false and baseless information with mala fide motive; and

b) not publishing rejoinders.

On behalf of The Daily Star we give the following reply.

As for the first, we stand by our reports.

In this regard we commend the conscientiousness of the Bangladesh Bank whose investigative work has brought valid information to the fore about manipulation of our banking system. Without its extraordinary work the public would have remained in the dark about the depth of the malaise.

As for the second, we categorically deny that we suppressed any rejoinder sent by Beximco. The last time we received any communication from Beximco was a legal notice received on 22 June '97, which

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Sayeed Iskander briefing newsmen yesterday.

— Star photo

Sayeed Iskander barred from going abroad

By Staff Correspondent

Major (ret'd) Sayeed Iskander, younger brother of BNP chief and leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia, was stopped at the Zia International Airport (ZIA) while he was leaving for London yesterday.

An official handout last night said Iskander was going abroad with the objective of 'establishing contacts' with the self-confessed killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Referring to information received by security authorities, the handout also said that Iskander's attempt to go to London at a time when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is due to participate in the forthcoming Commonwealth Summit and his possible 'contacts' are

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Pirates attack fishing trawlers in Baufal: 1 killed, 4 hurt

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Oct 19: One person was killed and four others were injured when a gang of armed pirates swooped on three fishing trawlers in east Tetulia river under Banfal thana of Patuakhali district last night.

According to police and the fishermen, a gang of armed pirates, numbering about 15 attacked the three fishing trawlers, owned by Rahim Bepari, Syed Chowdhur and Ismail Bepari, in the Tetulia river left Karim Bepari 30, was killed on the spot while Rahim Bepari, 35, Babul, 30, Abdur Rahim, 26, and Nizamuddin, 25, were seriously injured during indiscriminate firing.

At one stage, nearby fishermen came forward and chased

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N'ganj police unearthing major int'l child trafficking gang

By Morshed Ali Khan and Ehsanul Haque

Police have made substantial progress in unearthing an organised gang of international child traffickers who have smuggled out scores of children from Shahidnagar in Narayanganj.

Police recently arrested a woman, Shonai Bibi, and her three associates who admitted to police that they had long been involved in child trafficking and smuggled out many children from the area.

Narayanganj police and villagers believed that Shonai and her associates were merely acting as 'field workers' and that their 'big bosses' remained at large.

"We are trying to catch the 'big bosses' but our resources are so limited that it would be better to involve the CID to come into action here," observed a police official at Narayanganj, requesting anonymity.

Police also believe that

Shonai and her accomplices were a part of an international network which operates in the country to smuggle out 'hundreds' of children and sell them to prospective buyers in the United Arab Emirates to be used as camel jockeys.

Shonai was arrested after one Shahar Ali, a rickshaw-puller, sued her for trafficking his nine-year-old son, Sohail in February last.

Police Sub-inspector Quamrul Islam, who is investigating the case, said they arrested Rabeya, Osman and Aalek with clues provided by Shonai.

On the long route to Mumbai in India from Narayanganj, Rabeya used to impersonate the 'mother' of the smuggled children. Her duty was to deliver them at a point in Mumbai.

Police arrested Rabeya after she returned with two 'rejected' boys — Russel and Nazmul — and tried to hand them over to

their respective parents in the same area. There are three Bangladesh children in an Indian jail, Rabeya told police.

Following her statement, one Osman was arrested on charges of helping the trafficking by maintaining an 'up-to-date' liaison with the transit points and the host country. Sources said Osman had on-line fax and telephone at his disposal to maintain the international liaison on a regular basis.

Police strongly suspect that Aalek was an active member of the gang. "We are still investigating his involvement," an official said.

Some local people observing the developments in Shahidnagar for the last one year alleged that Shonai Bibi had long been involved in smuggling children to Dubai with the help of two of her daughters — Noornahar and Noorjahan.

When contacted, Noornahar's husband Jalaluddin Jalu, who lived in Dubai for four years told The Daily Star that he returned from Dubai following family feuds. "When I realised that my wife herself was involved in child trafficking I decided to leave Dubai," he said.

Jalu denied his involvement in the smuggling but gave details of maltreatment of Bangladesh children there.

On arrival, a child is put under rigorous training on how to negotiate a racing camel. After he is trained, the owner of the racing camel pays 300 UAE Dirham (roughly equivalent to Tk 3,600) for his participation in each race.

"They tie the child with the camel and then the camel starts running. The screams of the frightened child agitates the beast which unleashes its anger by running faster," said Jalu

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বাংলাদেশ পোশাক প্রস্তুতকারক ও রপ্তানী কার্য সমিতি (বিজিএমইএ)
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