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# The Daily Star

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## 'No ban on peaceful procession on street'

The government last night said there is no restriction on "peaceful procession" on the street and urged all concerned to refrain from such activities that would disrupt normal public life, reports UNB.

An official handout came out with the clarification in response to recent press reports that said the government obstructed processions of political parties.

It denied any obstruction to peaceful procession by law enforcing agency and said the present government is respectful to the democratic way of protest or of expressing one's opinion.

But, it said, processionists of some political parties damaged vehicles and property and See Page 12 Col 3

## AL invites BNP to discuss political cases

By Reaz Ahmad

Post and Telecommunication Minister Mohammad Nasim, who heads the five-member committee formed earlier to look into "political cases" against leaders and workers of BNP, has invited the members of the committee for its first meeting today.

"We will discuss the list of cases provided by BNP to us," Nasim told this correspondent last night.

Nasim said he telephoned a BNP lawyer, Major (ret'd) Hafizuddin Ahmed, a member of the committee, to attend a meeting.

Hafizuddin, when contacted told this correspondent last night that he got the invitation for attending the meeting, "I will talk to our party secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan tomorrow (Saturday) morning and decide about our participation in the meeting," he said.

The committee was formed in early September at a See Page 12 Col 7

## Albright to visit Bangladesh

US Secretary of State Madeleine K Albright will visit Bangladesh by the end of the current year, reports BSS.

The date and time of her proposed visit will be finalised at a later stage, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday from Washington.

Bangladesh ambassador in the United States KM Shehabuddin was conveyed of the coming visit of Madeleine Albright by US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Karl F Interfurth when the former called on him at the State Department in Washington on Thursday, the message said.

Albright will also visit India and Pakistan during her trip to South Asia, it was further stated.

Albright's visit to Bangladesh will further strengthen the existing relations between Bangladesh and the United States. The visit will take place at the invitation of Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad.

The whole gamut of bilateral relations and global matters is expected to be taken up during Albright's visit.

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

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## Queen opens CHOGM in Edinburgh Thrust on democracy, trade & development

EDINBURGH, Oct 24: The four-day Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) began today with a renewed pledge to make united and integrated thrust for promotion of democracy, the pursuit of prosperity through trade and development and the building of consensus among the member nations, reports BSS.

Head of the Commonwealth Queen Elizabeth II formally inaugurated the 54-nation meeting with a clarion call to work collectively for the future of our people and for the wider world.

This is the first time in 20 years Britain has hosted a Commonwealth summit, and the first time in the queen's four-decade reign that she has

addressed the opening ceremony.

Being held at the World Conference Centre at the Scottish capital, the meeting is being participated by the heads of government, including Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The sunny autumn afternoon echoed with a determined pledge by Commonwealth leaders representing all geographical regions and development strata of the present day world.

The entire conference centre and its vicinity including the streets of Edinburgh was tastefully decorated by colourful banners, placards, festoons as well as national flags of Commonwealth countries which



Right: Slum dwellers picking through the ashes after their slum in the city's Mohammadpur area was gutted in a fire yesterday. Left: An affected slum dweller wailing.

## Hardliners influencing AL, BNP strategies

By Nurul Kabir

Hardliners in the ruling Awami League (AL) and the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) have started getting upper hand in deciding their respective party strategies to face each other, creating the possibility of further worsening of the already confrontational politics in the country, sources in the parties said.

The hardliners in the ruling party leadership, according to insiders, who enjoy the confidence of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, believe that BNP is out to destabilise both the political and economic situation only to discredit the government. The government, therefore, needs to go tough against BNP for the sake of both national and party interests, they argue with their moderate colleagues in the party.

"If not taken care of at the

beginning, BNP would make attempts to dislodge the government much before the expiry of its five-year term," said a member of the group advocating tough actions against the opposition party. Like some other leaders in the group, he also finds it justified to face BNP activists on the streets — even on hartal days. Replying to a query, an AL leader known to be a hardliner told The Daily Star: "The government should assert its existence before the elections even during hartals — called by the BNP."

According to AL insiders, this section of the leadership also believes that BNP would not behave, whatever concessions the government makes to the Opposition.

There are also people in the AL leadership who believe that face to face confrontation with

## One killed, 50 hurt in fire at city slum

By Staff Correspondent

A three-year-old child was burnt alive and about 50 people were injured in a devastating fire that gutted at least 250 shanties in a slum at Rayerbazar in the city's Mohammadpur area yesterday afternoon.

Police said the child could not be identified as the body was almost charred. The body was at Mohammadpur thana and none claimed it till last night, police said.

About 1,500 people were rendered homeless on the slum, near the Mohammadpur kitchen market, was burnt to ashes.

Besides, about 25 shops, some restaurants and a rickshaw garage were also gutted.

The fire reportedly originated from an oven in a hut in the slum, according to Fire Brigade sources.

Fire Brigade sources said six fire fighting units from its See Page 12 Col 1

## New Cairn HQs open in Edinburgh PM invites foreign cos to explore oil, gas

EDINBURGH, Oct 24: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina invited international companies, especially those of the Commonwealth, to participate in energy exploration in both onshore and offshore areas of Bangladesh, reports UNB.

She was addressing the opening ceremony of new headquarters of Cairn Energy, an internationally renowned British oil and gas exploration company, in the historic city of the United Kingdom today.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair and the Bangladesh Prime Minister jointly opened the office. Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury and Principal Secretary to the PM Dr SA Samad were present.

Speaking on the occasion, Tony Blair said that there are tremendous opportunities for

growing partnership in trade and investment between the two countries in future.

"This British government is fully behind you (Bangladesh)", he said adding that great possibilities are opening for us in Bangladesh to the advantages of both of our countries.

Tony Blair described the present changes and reforms in Bangladesh as "tremendously exciting" and lauded the steps taken by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to attract foreign investment.

Appreciating the presence of Sheikh Hasina in the inaugural ceremony of a British dominated multinational organisation, Blair said, "Let us go together playing as a team from strength to strength."

Addressing the function, Sheikh Hasina said, "The presence of Prime Minister Tony See Page 12 Col 7

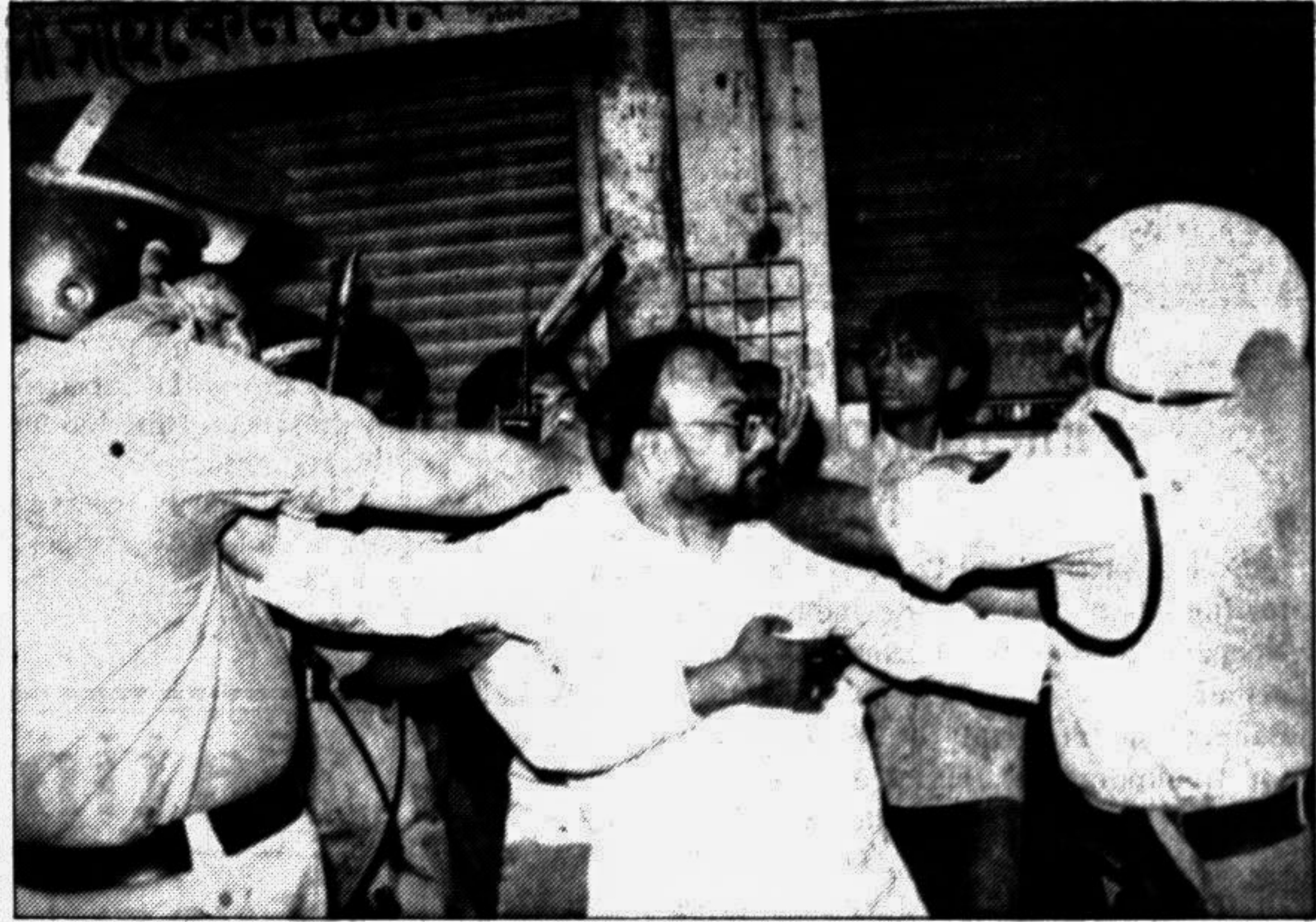
## Expand facilities for Bangladeshi workers, Hasina urges Mahathir

EDINBURGH, Oct 24: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad today stressed the need for strengthening economic cooperation between the two countries, reports BSS.

This was expressed at a cordial meeting when Sheikh Hasina called on Mahathir at Balmoral Hotel suit. The two leaders are now in Edinburgh to attend the meeting of the Commonwealth heads of government.

Sheikh Hasina urged the Malaysian leader to expand facilities for Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia. She also urged Mahathir to expand bilateral cooperation, including trade and investment.

The Malaysian Prime Minister assured Sheikh Hasina of full cooperation in areas involving mutual benefit. Referring to Bangladeshi workers in See Page 12 Col 5



A scuffle between police and BNP activists in a procession led by the party's city unit convener Sadek Hossain Khoka, MP, at Najirabazar yesterday.

## AL urges BNP to shun path of destructive politics

Ruling Awami League yesterday expressed deep concern over what it called a deep-rooted conspiracy of certain quarters to create anarchy and instability in the country to gain their "heinous political ends", reports UNB.

A meeting of the party's Presidium observed that those quarters are out to deteriorate the law and order situation at a time when the parliament session has been summoned and a dialogue is going on between the government and opposition parties.

The meeting held at the See Page 12 Col 6

## BNP demonstrators in city teargassed

By Staff Correspondent

Police used tear gas and batons to disperse BNP supporters demonstrating in the city's Najirabazar area yesterday, injuring several persons including a ward commissioner.

Police said the trouble broke out when nearly two thousand BNP supporters led by the party's city unit convener Sadek Hossain Khoka, MP, were stopped at the Najirabazar road intersection while they were going towards the Kazi Alauddin Road in a procession. There was a scuffle between police and Sadek Hossain Khoka when police tried to stop the demonstrators. Police said they apprehended that they were going towards the family home of City Mayor Mohammad Hanif at Kazi Alauddin Road, protesting demolition of a BNP office at Bangshal on Thursday by the City Corporation.

Clashes broke out on the narrow road intersection and spread to the alleyways when police swung into action using batons and tear gas to disperse the demonstrators.

Police picked up five persons. But the agitated BNP supporters blocked the streets and prevented the police van carrying the detained persons from See Page 12 Col 3

## Asia-Pacific rover moot begins in Sylhet today

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Oct 24: The Ninth Asia Pacific and Seventh National Rover Moot will begin in Sylhet tomorrow morning.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed is expected to inaugurate the moot at 11 am.

This year's theme is 'Rovering for Better World'.

Chief National Commissioner of Bangladesh Scouts Manjur-ul-Karim while speaking at a press conference at Luckatooah Golf Club today said, all steps have been taken for the grand occasion. About three thousand rovers from home and abroad are expected to take part in the moot this year and about 2700 have already reached the venue, he said.

About 550 tents have already been pitched on 71 acres of hillocks and plain lands in the Luckatooah Golf Club area. See Page 12 Col 5

## Six killed, 40 injured in road accidents

By Staff Correspondent

Six persons were killed and 40 others injured in separate road accidents in Pabna and Faridpur Thursday night and early yesterday.

Of the six, four were killed in a road accident on Pabna-Nagarbari Highway while two others killed in another road accident on Faridpur-Khulna Highway.

Our Correspondent from Pabna adds: Four persons were killed and 25 injured, two critically, when a Chapainawabganj-bound night coach from Dhaka hit a stationary truck on the Pabna-Nagarbari Highway and fell into a roadside ditch at Kuchitamor, 16 kilometers off the town Thursday night.

The critically injured persons were Taslim Uddin, Ittefaq correspondent and Shamsul Islam, Sangbad correspondent of Chapainawabganj. They were first taken to Pabna General Hospital and then shifted Rajshahi Medical College Hospital

today, hospital sources said.

Of those killed, three were identified as Amir Ali and Arif of Chapainawabganj and Abdur Razzak of Nagarbari. They died on the spot. The fourth victim, who died on way to Pabna hospital, could not be identified. The body was lying at the hospital, the sources said.

Thirteen of the injured persons were admitted to Pabna Hospital. They are: Momin, Fakhrul, Anisul, Amirul and Mohammad Ali of Chapainawabganj; Abdul Wahab, Mainul, Maveyuddin and Manzu of Natore; Raisuddin of Bhangaora; Moyezuddin of Bhabantpur in Pabna district; Masudur Rahman of Godagari; Shamsul Islam of Islampur and Taslima of Shibganj in Chapainawabganj.

Our Faridpur Correspondent writes: Two persons were killed and 15 others injured in a road accident at Dumrakandi on See Page 12 Col 2

## Ferry service across Jamuna disrupted again

By Staff Correspondent

Hundreds of inter-district buses and trucks are stranded at Aricha, Notakhola and Doulatdia ghats due to disruption in ferry service following rapid fall in water level in the river Jamuna.

While visiting Aricha yesterday, this correspondent saw a big queue of buses, trucks and other vehicles at the ghat. A good number of the trucks were carrying perishable goods. It was gathered from sources at the Aricha ferry terminal that some 3,200 vehicles were stranded at the three ghats.

Ferry movement has become difficult due to abnormal fall in the water level and emergence of shoals. BIWTA sources at Aricha ghat said.

Only two out of five ghats at Aricha, one out of two at Notakhola and two out of three at Doulatdia are now in operation for ferry movement.

BSS adds from Manikganj: A big Ro-Ro ferry, 'Shahjalal', See Page 12 Col 5

## SAARC customs cooperation meet in city Oct 30

By Staff Correspondent

The two-day second meeting of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) group on customs cooperation will begin in the capital on October 30.

The meeting will review the progress in the implementation of 1996 revision of HS System (Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System), officials said yesterday.

Besides, the decisions of the first meeting of Customs Administrations of SAARC member countries held in New Delhi, October 1995, and the first meeting of group on customs cooperation held in April 1997 See Page 12 Col 5

## Slum dwellers' resettlement project faces setback

By Naimul Haq

The 28.5 million, US dollar project for resettlement of the city slum dwellers, to be jointly funded by the government and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), may face a setback as the government could not yet arrange the required lands.

According to sources in the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), the implementing agency of the project, different ministries were requested to make lists of khas lands which would not be used in at least 10 years. "The response is very poor so far. It seems that sufficient lands for resettlement of the slum dwellers may not be available,"

said a high official of the LGED.

The fate of the 28.5 million dollar project is quite uncertain now. ADB high officials at a wrap up meeting in June expressed dissatisfaction over the progress on the issue," he added.

One of the ADB conditions is that it would sanction a loan of 20 million dollars if the government could guarantee land for the new settlers at least for 15 years. "None of the ministries can guarantee securing land for such a long period. The stringent ADB terms have turned out to be very difficult to fulfil," the official said.

Implementation of the project See Page 12 Col 2

## Arms recovered in city: 5 held

By Staff Correspondent

The Detective Branch (DB) of police arrested five persons and recovered five firearms from Sutrapur area in the City yesterday.

During a 24-hour raid in Sutrapur area, the DB team arrested Khokon Gaji, Nurul Islam alias Babu, Enamul Huq alias Farhad, Mustafakar Rahman alias Rana and Swapan from Lalmonohar Saha Street in South Maisundi.

Following confessions of the arrested persons police recovered four revolvers, two sawn-off guns, one pipe gun, one machine, a rifle magazine and 117 bullets from a room of South Maisundi Community Centre and a dwelling house on Lalmonohar Saha Street.

Two separate cases were lodged with Sutrapur thana in this regard.

## More aid utilisation unlikely to raise forex reserve: officials

By Inam Ahmed

Contrary to the World Bank's (WB) suggestion that increased aid utilisation would help raise foreign exchange reserve, government officials contend that this would hardly make any difference.

Their argument lies in the fact that conventional aid is basically meant for import and it is the policy-based lending that actually adds to the country's reserve.

"But beginning from now to near future, there are hardly any big policy-based lending

that could mean that improvement in disbursement would jack up the foreign exchange reserve," said a senior finance ministry official. "In fact, some big policy-based loans like Jute Sector Adjustment Credit (JSAC), and Public Resource Management Adjustment Credit (PRMAC) helped the country accumulate huge foreign exchange reserve, as much as 3.5 billion US dollars, in the mid 1990s."

But government officials point out that foreign aid disbursement in 1996-97 was higher than the previous year's, and still the reserve plummeted. Disbursement in 1996-97 was 1475.3 million dollars See Page 12 Col 1

## Confce on South Asian refugees in city next month

By Reaz Ahmad

A conference on refugee issues in the city next month will bring judges, academicians and experts from South Asian region together to propose a model 'National Legislation on Refugees'.

The aim is to stimulate governments of the SAARC countries to adopt more refugee related programmes and policies. None of these countries have yet ratified the 1951 International Refugee Convention.

The two-day conference styled 'Fourth Informal Meet- See Page 12 Col 6

## Fertiliser dealers for 'optional delivery'

By Reaz Ahmad

The Bangladesh Fertiliser Association (BFA) has urged the government to allow fertiliser dealers "optional delivery" of urea till the advent of the peak season for fertiliser use in January, enabling them to overcome a cash crisis.

Fertiliser lifted by dealers earlier remained unsold and if they are to lift more fertiliser as per the dealership contract, they will be out of business due to cash crisis. BFA chairman Kafiluddin Ahmed told this correspondent yesterday. They

have reached a position that they can no more abide by the contract rule," he said.

As per the contract, a dealer loses his dealership as Tk two lakh if he fails to lift the allotted fertiliser for two consecutive months.

The BFA represents 3,800 fertiliser dealers across the country. Already, some 400 dealers have surrendered their dealership in the last couple of months, he said. Some 125 BFA See Page 12 Col 4

## 18 hurt as AL, BNP clash in Shahzadpur

SIRAJGANJ, Oct 24: Some 18 people were injured, five of them seriously, in a clash between the Awami League and BNP activists at Shahzadpur today, reports UNB.

The clash followed an alleged attack by Awami League activists on a BNP leader's house, local sources said.

Earlier, on Tuesday, the AL also allegedly attacked a BNP rally at Shahzadpur Government College.