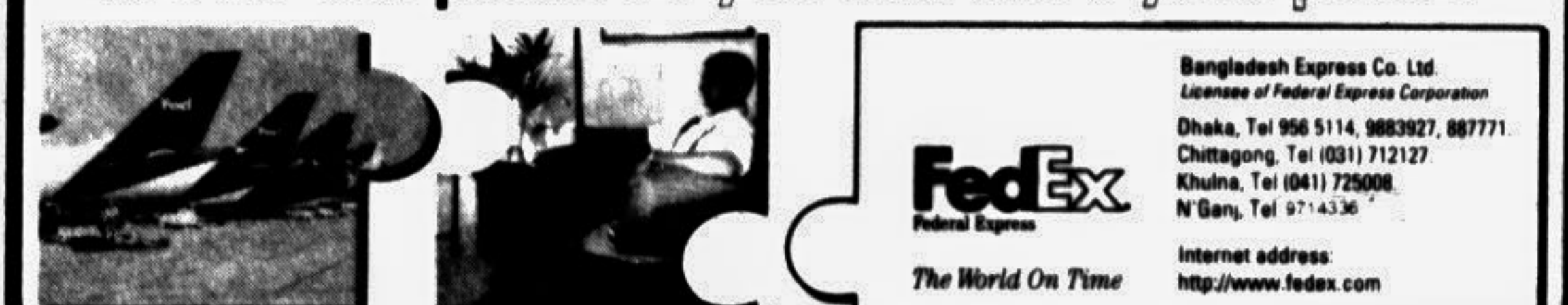


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Down to Earth

City's Dark Underworld

By ASM Nurunnabi

In every big city of the world, there is existence of an underworld of crime. Dhaka city is no exception in this regard. Even before independence and afterwards, the crime world has grown and expanded with the rapid spread of physical dimension of Dhaka city. Illegal arms trafficking, sales of drugs through a wide network, forcible occupation of lands, and extortion of money—all these have combined to strengthen the crime world gradually. According to sources concerned, the total number of 'Godfathers' in the underworld is quite large—approximately more than three hundred. These 'Godfathers' are said to be holding the levers in controlling the underworld.

With the growth of the city's underworld, a long history of bloodshed and various other crimes is associated. Before the days of independence, old part of the city was the cradle of the underworld activities. In those days, the centres of terrorist activities were Narinda, Ganderia, Warli, Kaltabazar, Bangshal, Sheikh Shaheb Bazar, Azimpur, etc. After independence, it was alleged that a large part of the control apparatus of both old and new Dhaka went into the hands of those holding political power at that time. That marked the beginning of the underworld culture.

At the beginning of the post-independent era, a qualitative change was noticed in the underworld culture, particularly in the field of use of firearms. Previously, the main instrument for carrying on the terrorist activities were knives, cycle chains, hockey sticks and hatchets. These were subsequently replaced by pistols, sten guns and hand bombs which were available in profusion.

According to the sources, the law-enforcing agencies are said

to have prepared a list of 'Godfathers' who are active all over the country. Most of these 'Godfathers' are said to be based in Dhaka city and holding the keys to the underworld activities. It is said that these 'Godfathers' take care of the terrorists operating in the city. When any of this group is arrested, it is these 'Godfathers' who exercise their influence in terms of money or otherwise to get him out of the jail. It is also learnt that most of the so-called 'Godfathers' are very influential people with established social standing. The majority of them are alleged to have political connections. Some of them are even said to have links with educational institutions and commercial interests.

According to the sources, a section of business community maintain links with the city's underworld in the interest of their own security and also to ensure that suitable operatives of that group play a supportive role in any illegal business activity like smuggling and keep other terrorist groups which might pose dangers to their own patrons under proper vigilance and control.

Dhaka metropolis has expanded far and wide. With such expansion, the number of strongmen claiming rights of operation in specific areas of the city has also increased. In this manner, the different areas of the city seem to have been carved up among such claimants who are leading figures in the underworld. The city dwellers have no inkling of such sharing of the city's operational areas.

In the heart of the city, Ramna area offers a vast field for operation of terrorists and toll-collectors, according to reports of law-enforcing agencies. The many markets in this area provide a lucrative source of funds for the operatives of the

underworld. The expanded areas of the city where the underworld operatives reportedly remain active include Gulshan, Malibagh, Purana Paltan, Shantinagar and Motijheel Colonies. According to police record, the large Mirpur area is marked as one of the crime zones. The Sayedabad area is said to be another such zone. With the extension of the underworld, the centres for transaction of business in illegal firearms are also said to have proliferated. It is rumoured that the underworld operatives possess even such sophisticated weapons which the law-enforcing agencies lack. It is an intelligent guess that in the city, there are quite a good number of arms manufacturing units, most of which are of a floating nature. They are housed in rented houses and when the police get wind of their existence in any area, they are quickly shifted elsewhere to avoid police raids.

It is said that there are three tiers in the chain of command in the underworld. At the top stand the so-called 'Godfathers', in the middle there are 'mini-godfathers' and at the bottom tier stand the terrorist and toll-collecting cadres. The large segment of such cadres are said to keep their focus of attention on real estate business and garments industries. The multi-storied housing projects and pre-shipment schedules of the garments industries are reportedly their main targets for toll collection.

Knowledgeable sources say that there are no last words about the underworld activities, as they are all the time expanding. The proliferation of city slums which in many cases pose as havens for the criminals compounds the problem of effective tackling of the rising menace.

Tk 37cr WASA project to meet city water needs

Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (WASA) has taken up project to meet the demand for water in the most crisis prone areas of the city, specially in the old part, reports UNB.

The project costing about Tk 37 crore will be completed by June 1999 to add nine crore litres daily to the WASA's water supply, sources said.

Under the project, 15 new deep tubewells will be installed, 14 others re-installed and 90 kilometres of water pipelines set up.

The ECNEC, while approving the project, discussed the system loss of 53 per cent which has been attributed to technical fault and alleged dishonesty of the meter readers.

The Dhaka WASA has undertaken a step to detect leakage in the pipelines and hoped it would bring down the system loss.

To stop tampering by the meter readers, the WASA has handed over two of its six zones to private management.

In other areas, the trade unions have been integrated

with the responsibility of revenue collection and also to stop tampering in meter reading. Pilferage of water deprives the Dhaka WASA at least Tk 50 crore each year in lost revenue and also compel millions of the city dwellers to drink polluted water, officials say.

They listed illegal connections, underbilling, improper maintenance and defalcation as the four basic factors which are responsible for the huge water loss.

Of the total system loss, about 20 per cent is due to technical reasons and nearly 33 per cent 'administrative' lapses.

About 65 per cent of the city population has access to or is connected with the WASA network and remaining 35 per cent obtained water from public connections or from illegal steps.

The Dhaka WASA has a total of 151,000 connections in Dhaka city. Of these, about 90,000 are metered while 18,577 not included in the ledger book. Some 1,711 connection are illegal.

Fertiliser dealers

From Page 1
members from 64 districts held a day-long meeting in the capital Monday to take stock of the situation.

The demand for urea at farmers level has fallen due to its high price compared to the low price of agricultural products, he said.

Explaining this, BFA executive secretary Abdul Baten said, "against the projected demand of 6.61,000 MT urea during the first quarter of the current financial year, we could lift only 4,40,000 MT urea till mid-October. Again, 1,25,000 MT urea remained unsold."

Meanwhile, the initial high projection of 25 lakh MT urea demand for fiscal 1997-98 has been lowered to 21 lakh MT on the basis of consumption trend during the first three months of the fiscal.

The decision to lower the projection was taken at an inter-ministerial advisory committee meeting on fertiliser on Sunday.

After revision of the demand, government is also expected to review the initial import target of five lakh MT of urea. So far, two and a half lakh tonnes have been imported. No fresh import would be required provided all the six urea fertiliser factories run by Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) maintain uninterrupted production.

According to officials, fertiliser market in the country is now steady and the price is under control due to some steps including prevention of smuggling.

Sources in the ministries concerned said, discipline has been brought in fertiliser marketing.

'Sorry, your majesty, I am late'

EDINBURGH, Scotland, Oct 24: It's simply not done to arrive after Queen Elizabeth II, reports AP.

But Nelson Mandela got away with it Friday when he showed up slightly behind schedule for the opening of a Commonwealth summit.

The Queen was chatting with Tony Blair in the lobby of Edinburgh's International Conference Center when the British prime minister glanced around and broke away to welcome South Africa's president.

"Hello, Tony, how are you?" Mandela boomed at the approaching Blair. Together, they moved inside and, as they neared the Queen, Mandela called out, "I'm terribly sorry, Your Majesty, that I'm late."

And the old Mandela magic worked. The 78-year-old former political prisoner, in a trademark boldly printed shirt, was rewarded with a wide royal smile and a chat.

Protocol dictates that everyone, even presidents, get there before royalty at public events.

AL BNP hardliners

From Page 1
in social, political and economic life of the people but it has resorted to repressing political opponents to make sure that the Opposition cannot speak out the truth before the people.

But the policy makers of BNP, are divided over the strategy to face the situation.

A section of the party leadership, especially those having decades of political experience, maintains that they need some more time to mobilise and warm up the party rank and file across the country, before going for an all-out agitation against the government.

"It is only natural that BNP will fight back government effort to curtail the people's constitutional rights to hold rallies and bring out processions, protesting mismanagement of the national economy," said one of the senior leaders, who prefers a go-slow. "But we need to get the party rank and file across the country well prepared, as well as ensure support of the commonman facing socio-economic hardship, to initiate a decisive movement against the government. It would take some more time."

The other section, comprising especially the younger ones,

ketting and smuggling of the item has been stopped. Transportation of urea from one command area to the other has also been stopped.

Two issues, surrender of dealership and seen expenditures, dominated Monday's meeting of the BFA.

Both Kafiluddin and Baten explained that 'unseen expenditures' like tolls collection by 'political elements' cost a dealer much and 'this issue has to be addressed by monitoring committees in each district.' But, they complained, the district monitoring committees were not active enough to redress problems faced by the dealers.

Official sources, however, said Sunday's meeting decided to further activate the district monitoring committees.

BFA plans to hold its annual general meeting on December 3 and hoped the problems they are facing now would be solved before the January-March peak season of fertiliser use by farmers.

Hasina

From Page 1
Malaysia he said his government would look into the matter.

Among others, Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Dr SA Samad and Foreign Secretary Mustafizur Rahman were present.

SAARC customs

From Page 1
will also come under review, the sources added.

The meeting, which will be inaugurated by Finance Minister SAMS Kibria, will finalise a draft customs action plan for the SAARC countries.

It would also finalise an agreement on Mutual Administrative Assistance for the proper application of customs law and for the prevention, investigation and combating of customs offences.

Ferry service

From Page 1
loaded with vehicles and passengers have been stranded on the Jamuna near Aricha ghat since yesterday noon. BIWTC authorities tried to salvage the ferry but failed.

Rescue operation is continuing in Aricha-Daulatdia and Aricha-Nagarbari routes. BIWTC sources said.

Rover moot

From Page 1
about 6 kilometres off the Sylhet town.

Rover groups including 293 of boys and 37 of girls from India, Japan, Pakistan, Nepal, Singapore, Indonesia and host Bangladesh are participating in the moot.

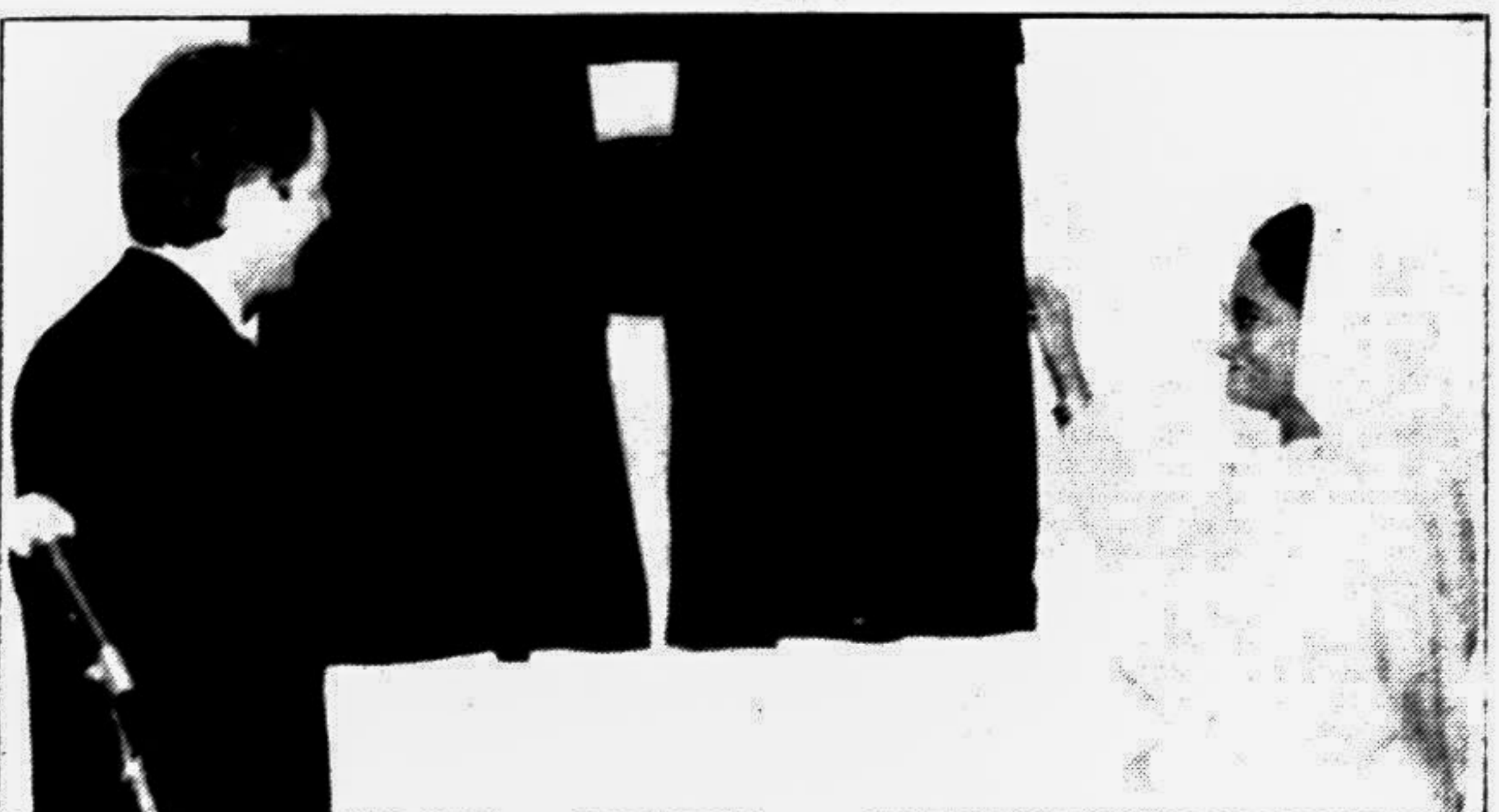
The President, after inaugurating the moot, will also release a set of postal stamps commemorating the occasion, said an official.

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Let's make things better
PHILIPS



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her British counterpart Tony Blair unveiling the plaque of new headquarters of Cairn Energy in Edinburgh yesterday. — PID photo

Confce on refugees

From Page 1

ing of the Regional Consultation on Refugee and Migratory Movement in South Asia" will begin on November 10 under the aegis of UNHCR, said officials of the UN body.

The Dhaka meet would be continuation of a process launched in 1994 at the initiative of UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata, said an official. The first South Asian consultation meeting on refugee issue, held in Geneva, was followed by second such meeting in Colombo in 1995 and the third in New Delhi last year.

A five-member committee was formed at the Delhi meet for preparing a draft model 'National Legislation on Refugees'. The initiative was taken with the idea that such a model would encourage the governments of SAARC countries to ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention, the official noted.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad is likely to be present as chief guest at the inaugural session of the meet scheduled to be chaired by Bangladesh Chief Justice ATM Afzal. Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru may be present on the concluding day, said organisers.

AL urges BNP

From Page 1

Awami Foundation office in the city with party's acting president Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury in the chair accused the BNP of patronising terrorists across the country to topple the elected Awami League government.

It protested "frequent attacks on public life and property" and called upon the opposition to shun the path of destructive politics and pursue democratic trend of politics, said an AL press release.

PM: Foreign cos

From Page 1

Blair and myself at this important event reflects what the Commonwealth stands for, that is, cooperation among friendly, sovereign and independent member states for mutual economic development."

She said her government placed special emphasis on economic diplomacy in its foreign relations and adopted the most liberalised and open-market economic policies possible under the existing circumstances.

Sheikh Hasina said Cairn Energy is well-known in Bangladesh because of its success in discovering gas in the continental shelf off the Bay of Bengal.

AL invites BNP

From Page 1

Speaker-mediated AL-BNP dialogue.

The meeting is scheduled to be held at the minister's office at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

Three other members of the committee are: Advocate Rahmat Ali, MP, and Mizanur Rahman Manu, MP of AL and Barrister Aminul Haq, MP of BNP.

Nasim said that he tried but could not contact Aminul Haq. Hafizuddin Ahmed however said, he informed Haq about today's meeting.

CHOGM opens

From Page 1

said, adding the developed and the developing worlds meet here on equal terms.

In his inaugural remark, British Prime Minister Tony Blair said this is a time of renewal and redefinition for Britain and the Commonwealth as well. "A Labour government would make sustained efforts to give new life to the Commonwealth and to Britain's role within it," he said.

Commonwealth Secretary General Chief Emeka Anyaoku said that every CHOGM is part of continuity, part of change in the pursuit of those values which make the Commonwealth uniquely what it is and of those objectives which give it meaning and purpose.

Indian Prime Minister IK Gujral, who also spoke on the inaugural function, said the Commonwealth is a voluntary association of sovereign and independent states, bringing together peoples of many races, religions and continents.

Besides four working sessions of the heads of government, massive cultural and entertainment programmes have been arranged to mark the occasion.

More aid utilisation

From Page 1
against 1444.8 million dollars in 1995-96. Project aid disbursement was 1111 million dollars, commodity aid 263 million dollars and food aid 101 million dollars in 1996-97. Excepting food aid, disbursement in other types of aid was higher than last year.

Food aid was 27 per cent lower than 1995-96 because the government felt that after a bumper crop, additional food import would put pressure on price.

In case of policy-related loans, the government can not outright spend it. "First the government has to use it in local currency and deposit the foreign exchange against its spending. This helps raise the foreign exchange reserve," the official said.

According to figures available from the Economic Resources Division (ERD) of the finance ministry, there had been a sharp upturn in policy-based lending since 1991-92 till 1994-95.

From 30,984 million US dollars in 1990-91, commitment of policy-based loans rose to 279,993 million dollars in 1991-92. It stood at 104,592 million US dollars in 1992-93, 281,257 million dollars in 1993-94, and 85,558 million dollars in 1994-95.

Keeping with rising commitment, disbursement of policy-based loans also rose to 64,719 million US dollars in 1991-92 from 56,888 million dollars in 1990-91. It shot to 105,257 million dollars in 1994-95.

Slum fire

From Page 1
headquarters, Palashi and Mohammadpur stations put out the fire in about three and a half hours.

Firefighters recovered the charred body from the debris and handed it over to Mohammadpur police.

An unnatural death case lodged with Mohammadpur thana in this regard.

UNB adds Mayor Mohammad Hanif yesterday visited the fire devastated area of Rayerbazar and expressed his sympathy for the victims.

He stayed there for more than two hours and assured the victims of all possible cooperation. The mayor talked to the parents of the two infants who were burnt to death in the flame. He assured that Dhaka City Corporation will extend possible help to them.

State Minister for Land Alhaj Rashid Mosharraf, Alhaj Makbul Hossain MP and local Ward Commissioner Sadeq Khan also visited the area.

Clashes leave 30 hurt in Sirajganj

SIRAJGANJ, Oct 24: About 30 people were injured in a series of clashes between two rival groups at Ranigram in Kaziপুর on Thursday and Friday, reports UNB.

Police said the clashes took place between supporters of Akbar and Hazrat over sub-contract work of an embankment project in Kaziপুর thana.

About 12 shops and eight houses were damaged during the clashes.

No ban

From Page 1

hurled stones and bombs at police in recent times, resulting in injury to many innocent people.

They also tried to hold rallies in the name of processions on the streets ignoring Dhaka City Corporation-designated places of public meetings, the handout said.

Police, BNP

From Page 1

leave the area. Further clashes were averted when police negotiated with the BNP leaders and local elders and released the arrested persons after taking personal bonds.

A BNP press release later said the procession by Kotwali and Sutrapur thana BNP units was brought out from its city office at Nayabazar as part of its earlier programme of demonstrations. It came under baton charge when it approached the Kazi Alauddin Road.

The press release said Li-aquat Ali Commissioner of Ward No 77 and city BNP leaders Abu Mainuddin, Advocate Habibur Rahman Mandal and Ms Razia Alam were injured in the police action.

Later the BNP supporters gathered at the Bangshal crossing where city BNP convenor Sadek Hossain Khoka, MP, addressed them. He bitterly criticised the police action, which he claimed was without any provocation.

In a statement later, BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, MP, strongly condemned the police action. He said that BNP supporters were demonstrating as part of their earlier announced programme and that police action on such demonstration without any prior prohibitory order was threatening democracy. He urged the government to refrain from what he said such undemocratic and unconstitutional activities.

The press release said BNP units in Lalbagh, Mohammadpur and Dhanmondi thanas also arranged demonstrations in their areas as part of a programme in the city yesterday to protest Wednesday's police action.

Road accidents

From Page 1

Faridpur-Khulna Highway early yesterday.

The accident occurred when a Gourmadi-bound private car collided head on with a passenger bus coming from Dhaka.

Driver of the car Solesman Mondol, 30, and its passenger Akram died on the spot.

Of the injured, three were admitted to Faridpur Medical College Hospital while the others released after first aid at a local clinic.

Slum dwellers

From Page 1

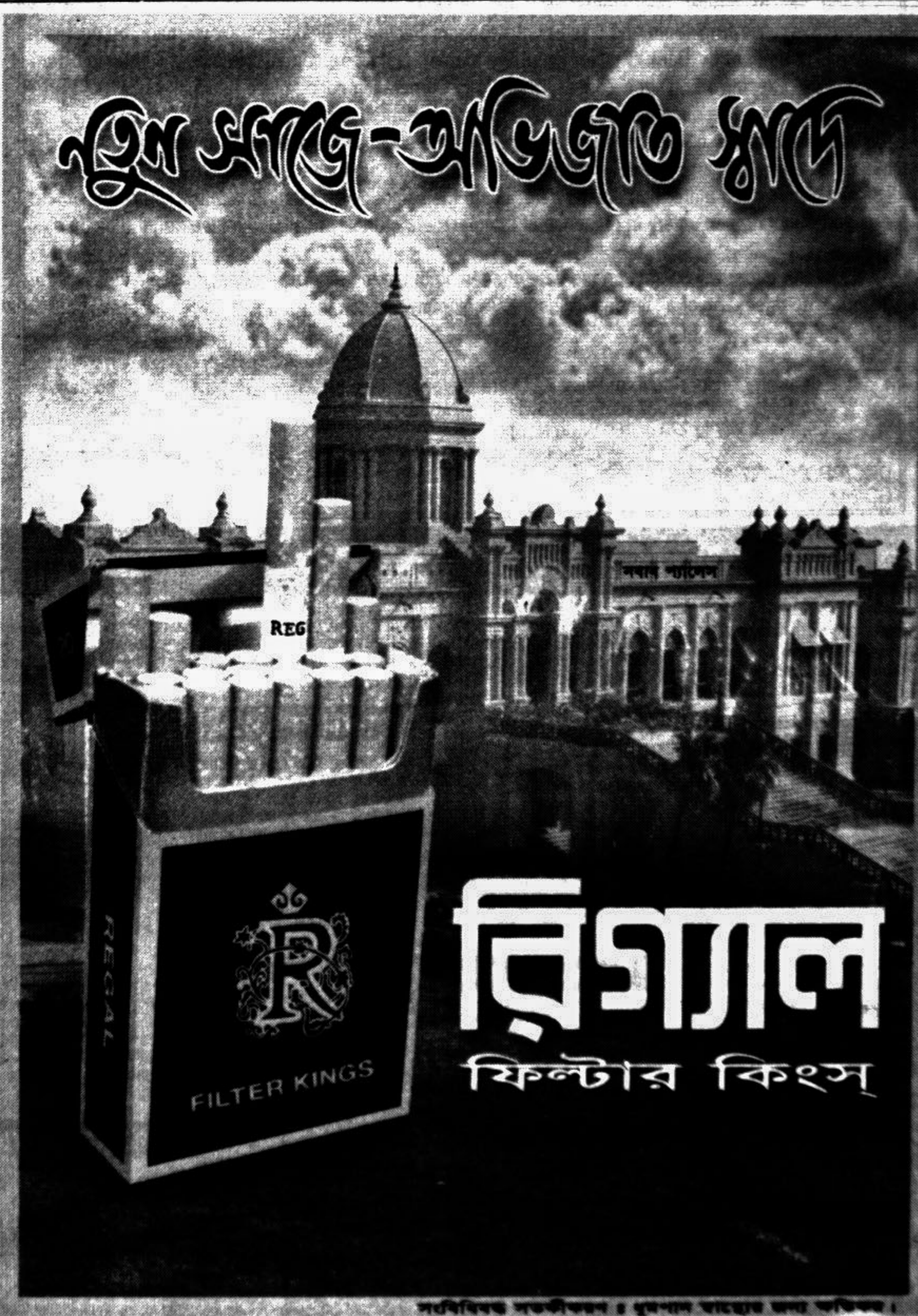
ject, aimed at improving overall life style of the beneficiaries through integration of various programmes for them, is scheduled to start in January.

According to a 1989 survey by the Centre for Urban Studies, there were about 2,156 slums in the city. The number has by now risen to around 3000.

Meanwhile, all other schemes under the project like microcredit, income generating activities, non-formal education, water supply, garbage collection, construction of footpath, and health education have remained suspended, LGED sources said.

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