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The Daily Star

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Cold wave on the wane

Star Report

The cold wave is on the wane but the mist will continue on and off.

The visibility, however, is expected to improve further from 9 am today. But a haze will shroud the sun again from 3 pm. Meteorological Department officials said yesterday. Despite a Met office forecast, there was no drizzle yesterday. There are "less chances" of drizzles today.

The sky remained overcast yesterday, the fog reinforcing the drifting clouds, making cricket lovers nervous on the prospect of today's Coca Cola Independence Cup cricket tournament.

The cold bite lost its intensity to some extent in the northern region but still claimed seven more lives yesterday, raising the total to 155 since the cold wave began late last year.

See Page 12 Col 2

President tells Prodi Italy one of our dependable friends

The visiting Prime Minister of Italy Prof Romano Prodi made a courtesy call on President Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday, reports UNB.

Welcoming the Italian Prime Minister, President Shahabuddin termed his visit "very significant" as it is the first ever official visit to Bangladesh by an Italian head of the government.

He said Italy was among one of the first countries who recognised Bangladesh and the relation between the two countries has grown over the years since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1972.

Both Bangladesh and Italy have excellent bilateral relations.

See Page 12 Col 4

17 DB teams to be deployed inside stadium

By Staff Correspondent

Seventeen teams of plainclothes police from the Detective Branch will be deployed to maintain security inside the Dhaka Stadium during the Independence Cup Cricket tournament beginning today.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police in a press release last night requested the spectators not to bring crackers, explosives or firearms and to refrain from exploding crackers or hurling brickbats inside the stadium.



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Inside Today

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Not Far from the Fire

Column: Beneath the Surface by Abdul Bayes Page 4

Star Literature

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Sehri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Jan	Sehri	Iftar
10	10	5-19	5-32
11	11	5-20	5-33
12	12	5-20	5-34

Hosts take on India in opener today

Independence Cup cricket

Cricket lovers in the country will wake up to a week-long cricket carnival today when hosts Bangladesh take on giants India in the opening tie of the Coca-Cola Independence Cup tournament at the Dhaka Stadium.

But a blanket of thick fog which has been prevailing over the country for the last few days threatens to disrupt a smooth progress of the tri-nation tourney that also includes Pakistan.

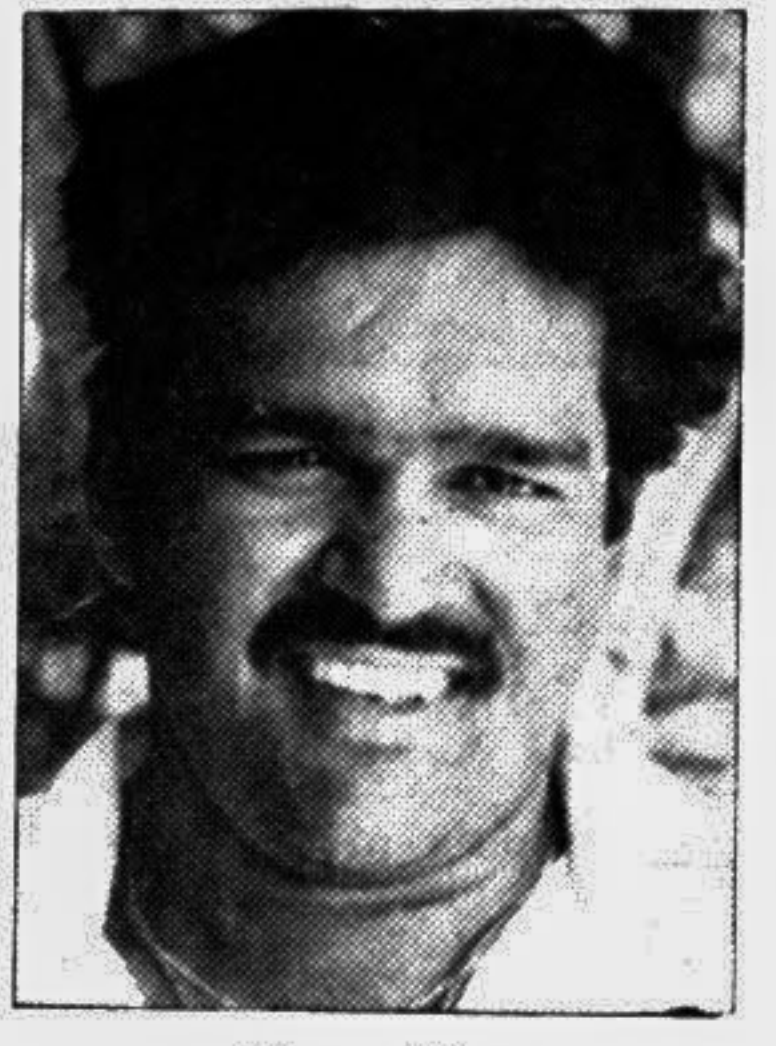
According to a Met Office forecast, the foggy weather is likely to prevail. If the condition does not improve today, the match is likely to have a delayed start. But Mike Denness, the match referee and former England captain, is still hopeful of a full 50-over-a-side affair.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad will formally inaugurate the tournament and the match is scheduled to start at 9 am.

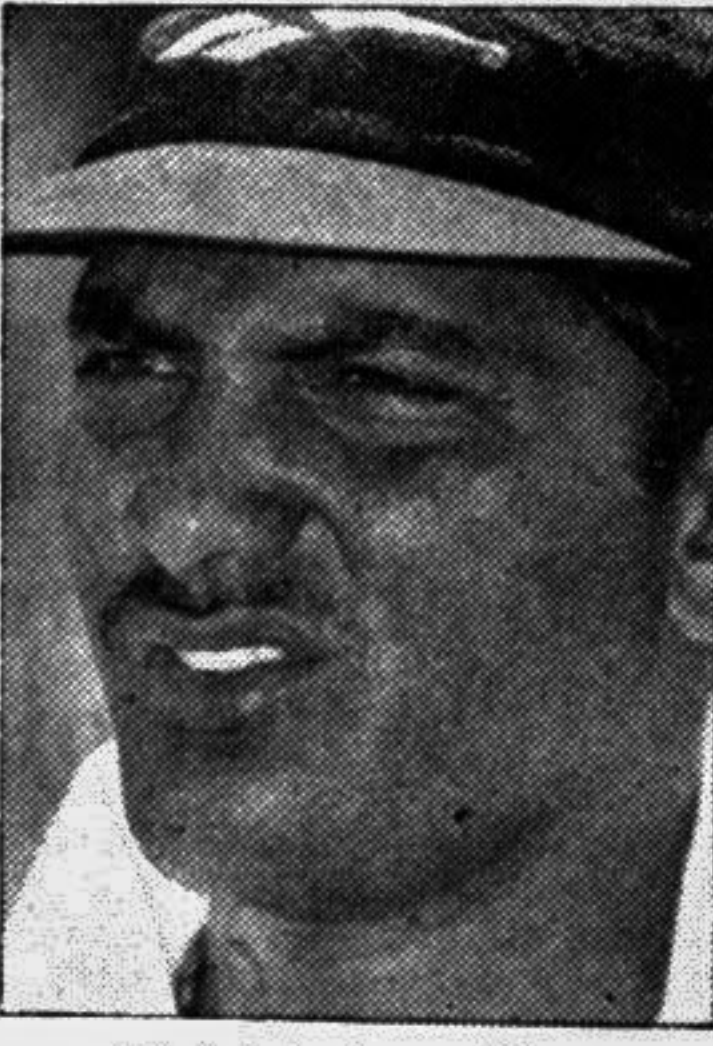
Both the state-run electronic media — Bangladesh Television and Betar — will provide the ball-by-ball commentary of the match from the big bowl.

The stage is all set to take the heat of the big time cricket. Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), organisers of the tourney to celebrate the country's Silver Jubilee of Independence, has completed all the necessary preparations to make the gala event a success.

However, Bangladesh skipper See Page 12 Col 1



Akram Khan



Mohd Azharuddin

Italy to join feasibility study on Ganges Barrage project Private sector to play vital role in expanding trade: Prodi



Italian Prime Minister Prof Romano Prodi addressing a joint press conference at the VVIP lounge at Zia International Airport yesterday. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina looks on. — Star photo

Explore trade potential, Prodi tells FBCCI Italy can help build telecom & energy sector infrastructure

By Staff Correspondent

Italian Prime Minister Prof Romano Prodi yesterday said that his country could contribute in building infrastructure in the telecommunication, energy and public utility sectors in Bangladesh.

"Moreover a very positive role can be played (in Bangladesh) by our small and medium enterprises," the visiting Prime Minister said in a meeting organised by the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI).

Although Bangladesh enjoys a positive trade balance with Italy, the Italian Prime Minister expressed his belief that the full potential of the mutual trade ties remained largely unexplored.

"The totality of our business activities does not reflect the true potentialities of our economies," "Our complementarities should be better exploited," he said.

"There might be a lack of reciprocal knowledge among our business communities," the Italian premier said emphasising on mutual exchange of trade information.

The meeting was attended, among others, by Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria, Commerce Minister Tofael Ahmed, Energy Minister Noor Uddin Khan, Shipping Minister A S M Abdur Rab, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury and FBCCI president Yusuf Abdullah Harun.

Prof Romano Prodi noted the usefulness of the small and medium-scale industries that can present excellent possibilities of co-operation in the form of joint ventures.

He said that Italy, one of the major exporters in the world, was now concentrating on improving trade relations with the Asian countries.

Yusuf Abdullah Harun assured the Italian businessmen of all possible assistance from the FBCCI.

Referring to the trade link with Italy, Harun noted, "trade volume (with Italy) remains low See Page 12 Col 8

By Staff Correspondent

Italy will join the international donors conference in Dhaka in March next and participate in the feasibility study on the Ganges Barrage project.

It will also set up a leather and footwear designing centre in Dhaka.

This was stated by the visiting Italian Prime Minister Prof Romano Prodi during the official talks with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office yesterday morning and later reaffirmed at a joint press conference at the VVIP lounge of Zia International Airport before his departure.

Prof Romano Prodi, who came to Dhaka on a two-day official visit, said his country wants expansion of trade, economic and cultural cooperation between Dhaka and Rome.

He also indicated that there might be collaboration in some sectors like leather and footwear.

Responding to a question Prodi said Italian entrepreneurs were happy to find an investment-friendly atmosphere.

See Page 12 Col 1



Homecoming: Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman waving at the jubilant crowd on his way to the then Race Course Maidan from the airport. He returned home this day in 1972 after nine months in Pakistani jail. — PID file photo

Harkin to urge US govt for raising garments quota

US Senator Tom Harkin yesterday said he would take up the issue of raising the quota of Bangladesh's ready-made garment exports to the America on his return to the country, reports BSS.

"I will take up this matter with the administration and I believe an increase will be helpful for Bangladesh which is doing an excellent job in the area of elimination of child labour," he told newsmen at the airport.

The American Senator was scheduled to leave this evening but his departure was delayed by the cancellation of the scheduled flight due to weather condition.

Harkin said he came here mainly to see how the memorandum of understanding on elimination of child labour from the garment industries was implemented here and to convey his admiration for achieving a "progressive and courageous objective."

"I met the Prime Minister and conveyed this feeling," he said, adding that other matters of "mutual concern" were also discussed.

The senator referred to his talks with other quarters here including the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and BGMEA officials and said what Bangladesh has done in this area is worth emulating for others.

Senator Harkin said all were unanimous here about the increase of 30 per cent quota for the ready-made garment exports to the United States and this would be taken up with the administration by him.

Our Staff Correspondent adds: Tom Harkin told the newsmen that he would report on both sides of the ghats.

7000 vehicles still stranded

SAVAR, Jan 9: A huge quantity of perishable commodities are rotting at Aricha, Nagarbari and Daulatdia ghats due to heavy traffic congestion prevailing there for about a week, report UNB.

According to BWTC sources, nearly 7,000 vehicles, including vegetable and fruit-laden trucks, remained stranded on both sides of the ghats.

Bangabandhu's home-coming day today

The Home-coming Day of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will be observed today, report agencies.

The Father of the Nation was confined in Pakistani prison during the entire nine-month of the liberation war. The Pakistan authority was forced to release him after Bangladesh emerged as an independent nation.

Bangabandhu was arrested on the black night of March 25 in 1971 from his Dhanmondi residence and flown to Pakistan by the Occupation Forces.

The then Dhaka Airport turned into a human sea to welcome the leader as people from the remote areas poured in to the city.

President Shahabuddin See Page 12 Col 4

Biman to open talks on leasing aircraft Monday

By Special Correspondent

Bangladesh Biman authorities are likely to open negotiations on Monday with representatives of the Australian National Airline on dry leasing a replacement aircraft for its damaged F-28 which crash landed in Sylhet last month.

The negotiations were delayed by three days due to non-arrival of two officials from the Australian Airline, who were due on Friday, Biman sources said.

Biman received a reply from the Australian company on Thursday to its offer for dry leasing the replacement aircraft from the same F-28-4000 series.

The Australian company said they are ready to negotiate on the price tag the Biman had offered. Until the aircraft is leased, another F-28 returns from Amsterdam, where it is undergoing a major overhaul, its domestic service will remain in a mess. Only one ATP is currently servicing at least five routes a day.

But fog forced cancellation of two domestic flights, to Chittagong and Syedpur yesterday evening. It also forced rescheduling of some international flights.

No decision yet on remanding ULFA leader

By Staff Correspondent

Police officials will decide on Sunday when to seek remand of Anup Jetia alias Golap Barua, said to be the general secretary of United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), for further interrogation.

Golap Barua and two of his accomplices, arrested in the city on December 21, are now detained in the Dhaka Central Jail. Four cases against them are now under investigation, police said.

Meanwhile, a BBC broadcast last night said that the ULFA guerrillas enforced a general strike (bandh) in Assam yesterday demanding release of Golap Barua.

Quoting officials in Assam, BBC said the strike did not affect much in the Bangladesh-dominated Barak valley and two hill districts inhabited by tribals. The BBC however quoted an ULFA spokesman as claiming that the strike was successful.

48 injured in Delhi blast

NEW DELHI, Jan 9: A bomb exploded in the midst of a lunch-time crowd just 100 meters (yards) from the New Delhi police chief's office today, injuring 48 people, sending bloodied office workers running in terror, and raising question about police efficiency, reports AP.

"It's a matter of shame that it took place right in front of the police chief's office," said Chief Minister Shahib Singh Verma, the capital's top politician. He called on city police chief Tlak Raj Kakkar to accept personal responsibility and resign.

Kakkar had no immediate comment.

5 Nepali ministers resign

KATHMANDU, Jan 9: Five dissident ministers of Nepalese Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa's cabinet resigned today, state radio announced, reports AFP.

Among them was Defence Minister Fatya Singh Tharu, it said. "The King has accepted the resignations submitted through Prime Minister Thapa," the report said.

The others are ministers without portfolio Prem Bhandari, Ram Krishna Acharya, and Mahendra Ray, and Rajiv Parajuli, Minister for Science and Technology, the official announcement said.

They poison canals in the Sundarbans for catches

By Morshed Ali Khan back from the Sundarbans

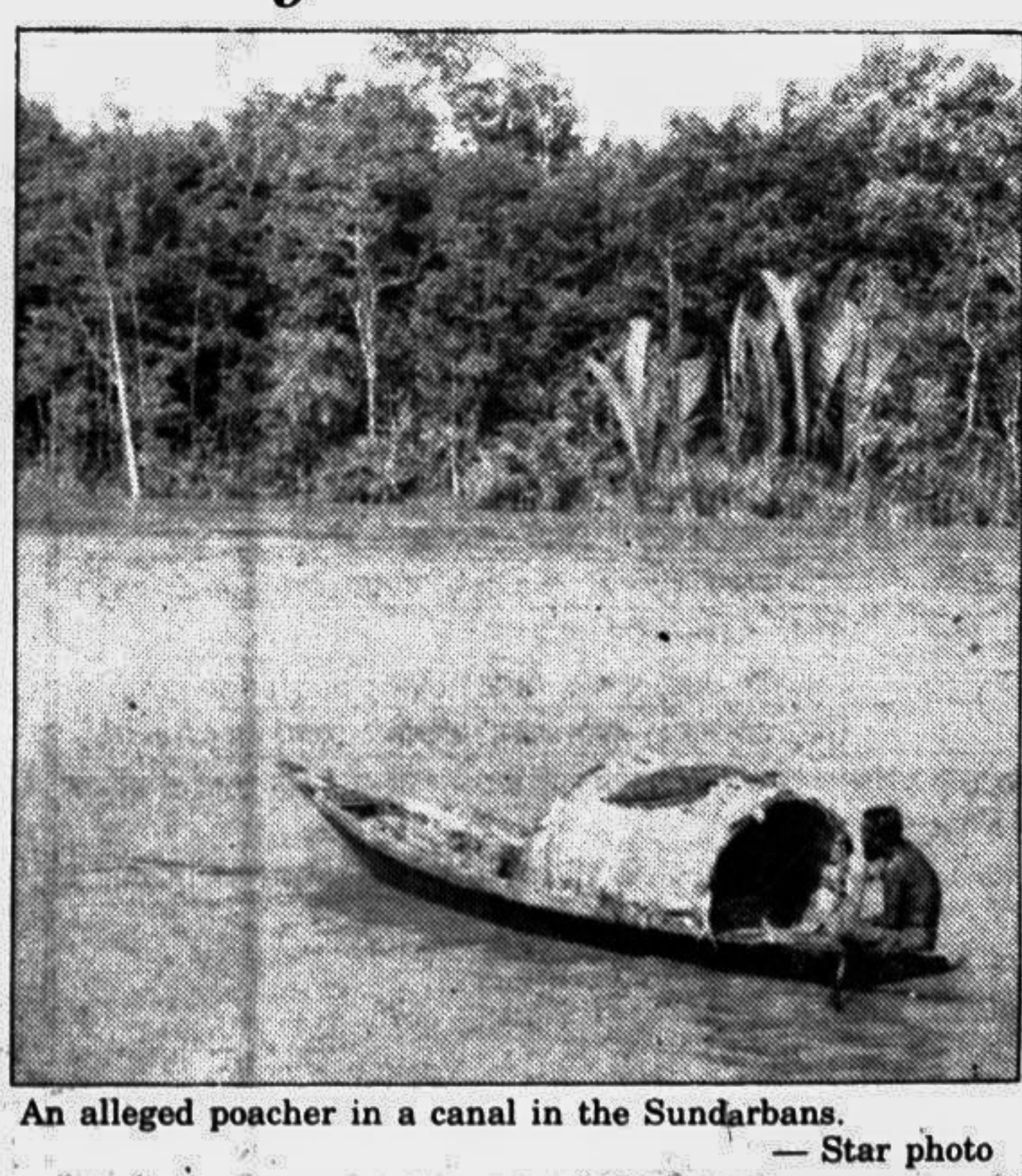
Poachers are using lethal poison in rivers and canals in the Sundarbans to catch shrimps, crabs and other fishes.

Use of such poison has been so rampant that the ecology of some areas in the Sundarbans have now come under threat, authorities there said.

"I caught some people red-handed recently with bottles of poison from the river," said Habibur Rahman Khan, Deputy Ranger and Station Officer of Dhaingamari forest office. "But the culprits were released because we failed to provide the court with test report on the fishes they had caught."

The official said that the court had asked the Forest Department to prove that the dead fishes were killed by poisoning. "We have no mechanism here to test the fishes. So nothing could be done," he said.

Explaining how the poisoning is done, the ranger said the poachers use a poison called "RIBOT", contained in a bottle similar to that of a cough syrup. "They spray few drops of this lethal liquid into the canal and See Page 12 Col 4



An alleged poacher in a canal in the Sundarbans. — Star photo

100 terrorist gangs active in city

About 100 terrorist gangs now operate in the capital, and each of them possesses a large number of illegal firearms, police said, reports UNB.

Last year, police recovered about 500 firearms and 6,000 bullets from different parts of the metropolis. Detective Branch of police alone recovered 234 arms of different types and 3,741 bullets. Most of these weapons were foreign-made, police said.

"It is impossible to recover all the illegal arms unless their supplies are stopped. Because the gangs manage to get fresh weapons immediately from other groups," said Deputy Commissioner of Detective Branch Syed Bazlul Karim.

3 of a family killed in road accident

From Our Correspondent JHENIDAH, Jan 9: Three women of a family were killed and four others injured in a road accident at Patubila village under Kaliganj thana early morning today.

The victims were identified as Hosne Ara Pottl, 40, Nahar Sultana Shila, 15, and Ruma, 14, of Arapara village of the same thana.

The accident occurred when a tractor trailer of Mobarakganj Sugar Mills collided head-on with a tempo on the Kaliganj-Kotchandpur Road at about 6:30 am, police said. The dead persons and the injured were the passengers of the tempo.

Benazir challenges accusers

ISLAMABAD, Jan 9: Accused by the government of massive fraud, former prime minister Benazir Bhutto today issued a challenge to her accusers: "Come forward with your evidence. I am not running away. My conscience is clear," reports AP.

More than one year after her government was dismissed from power, disgraced by relentless accusations of massive corruption, Benazir has not yet been formally charged with any crime.

However, her husband Asif Ali Zardari, and several political friends, have been jailed.

The 44-year-old Oxford-educated Benazir has steadfastly maintained her innocence and today accused Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of launching a witch-hunt to hide corruption within his own ranks.

She called the government's anti-corruption commission a "get-Benazir operation funded from state resources."

The commission set up last year to root out corruption has prepared at least 12 cases of fraud against Benazir.

It also has had several of her See Page 12 Col 6