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Eid Greetings



The Daily Star wishes its readers, patrons and well-wishers a happy Eid-ul-Azha

Eid-ul-Azha tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

The Eid-ul-Azha, the second biggest religious festival of the Muslims will be celebrated in the country tomorrow with due solemnity and religious fervour.

Animals will be sacrificed on the day symbolising Prophet Hazrat Ibrahim's sacrifice in the name of Allah.

Eid congregations, sacrifice of animals, visiting friends and relatives and exchanging greetings are the main features of the celebration.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleida Zia, in separate messages on the eve of Eid-ul-Azha, greeted the people and wished them happiness.

For office goers, mainly public servants, the three-day Eid holiday beginning today.

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2.3m perform Hajj this yr

MAKKAH, Apr 6: More than 2 million Muslims stood in prayer today at Ararat, the mount overlooking Makkah where Prophet Mohammed delivered his last sermon 14 centuries ago, reports AP.

The ritual climaxing the annual pilgrimage, or Hajj, marks one of the most sacred days of the Islamic calendar.

The pilgrims — all in seamless white robes symbolising purity — chanted in unison: "O Allah, I answered Your call... There is no Allah but You."

The Hajj so far has been incident free, unlike previous years that were marred by fires and stampedes, and the Saudis have gone out of their way to keep it that way. Helicopters hovered over the throng, and ambulances stood by to assist anyone overcome by heat or emotions.

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HOLIDAY

The offices of The Daily Star will remain closed on April 7, 8 and 9 on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha.

Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper on April 8, 9 and 10.

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14000 Bangladeshi girls in Calcutta brothels

13220 children trafficked out of country in 5 yrs till '96

By Mizan Ali

At least 13,220 children were trafficked out of the country in five years till 1996 and only 4,700 of them were rescued, revealed a report prepared by a private research organisation, quoting official statistics.

The study titled 'Child Trafficking: The Underlying Dynamics', conducted by the Centre for Women and Children Studies (CWCS), also revealed, "There are about 13 to 14 thousand Bangladeshi prostitutes in Tollyganj, Kallighat, Khidirpur, Boubazar and Sonagachhi brothels in Calcutta."

The study quoting some other reports also mentioned that during the five years up to 1996, only 53 cases were placed before court and 35 of those had to be dropped for lack of adequate evidence.

"Only 21 culprits have been convicted, the maximum punishment being 10 years rigorous imprisonment," the report added.

Prof Ishrat Shamim, president of CWCS and also a researcher involved in the study, told The Daily Star yesterday that they had carried out a three-month long investigation in two of the districts concerned in the country and also in Calcutta, to find out how the victims of trafficking end up.

"Many of those sex workers whom we met in the brothels claimed that they were trafficked from Bangladesh and were 10 to 14 years old when they first came to Calcutta," she said.

"A great demand exists for trafficked women and children as the major profit can be made by traffickers," she noted, adding "there are special trafficking times in the year, between June and August when food is scarce; or in the festival months of September-October."

Prof Ishrat noted, "Brokers and procurers maintain regular liaison with the godfathers of Sonagachhi and other brothels and maintain a strong network in India, Bangladesh and Nepal." The trafficking chain covers a wide range of criminal activities.

"For about a week we investigated in Calcutta to find out what happens to the children once they are smuggled out of Bangladesh," she said.

The study team visited Kallighat, Dayighat and Sonagachhi brothels in Calcutta and its report also contains case studies of the trafficked Bangladeshi girls engaged in prostitution there.

"We visited the brothels in Calcutta with the help of an organisation which is working on the door."

In another raid at Moghultuli, police arrested Abdul Kader from a house at 2 pm.

Kader was wanted in connection with about 20 criminal cases including murder and extortion.

After his arrest, activists of Chhatra League brought out a procession and put up barricades on the Agrabad-Badamtoli Road halting traffic, witnesses said.

Police dispersed the processionists and removed the barricades.

Police last year announced a Tk 50,000 cash reward for Nasir's arrest. He was earlier arrested in 1991, but was later released on bail.

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BCL-backed leader Kader held

Nasir arrested after gunfight in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Apr 6: Police, in two separate raids, today arrested the ring leader of Shibir-backed Nasir Bahini, Md Nasir, and the leader of Chhatra League-backed Kader Bahini, Abdul Kader, in the city.

Nasir, wanted in more than 20 criminal cases including murder, was arrested from Chittagong College Hostel at 4:30 pm, police said. On receipt of a secret information, police cordoned the hostel while Nasir was sleeping inside a room locked from outside.

Police had an exchange of fire with other members of Nasir Bahini, who were kept outside as a protection force.

At one stage, the protection force ran away and police caught Nasir by breaking open

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Five banks to provide loan for buying hides, skin

The disbursement of loans by four nationalised commercial banks and a private bank will total Tk 242.17 crore for purchase of hides and skins during the Eid-ul-Azha this year, reports BSS.

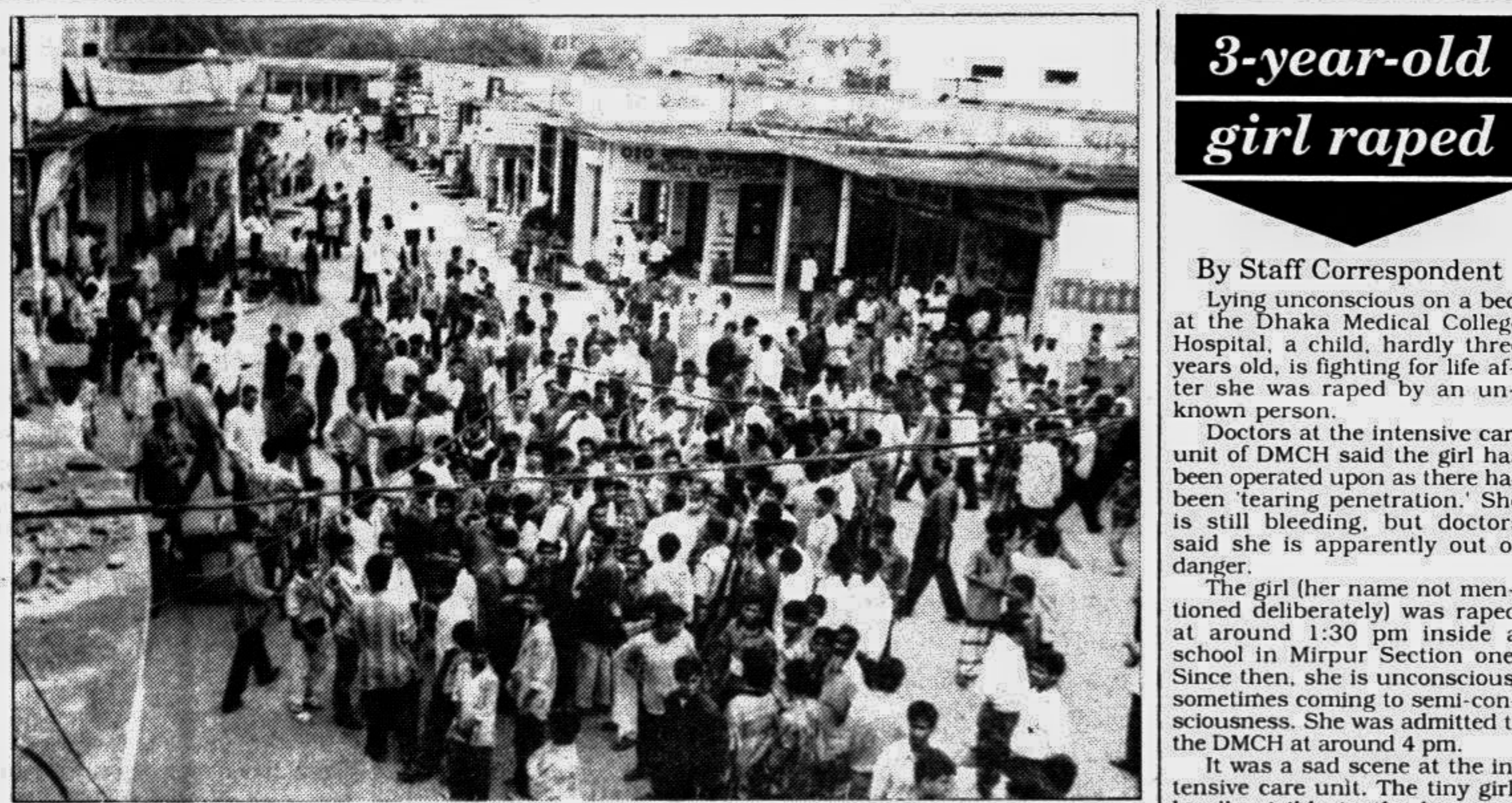
It was stated in a press release issued by Bangladesh Bank yesterday refuting reports published in a section of the press about scarcity of loans for purchase of hides and skins during the coming Eid.

It said the four NCBs and a private bank sanctioned Tk 193.17 crore for the purpose till April 5, 1998 while an amount of Tk 49.00 crore was under process of sanctioning.

"Under the circumstances, the total loans sanctioned appears to be reasonable," the press release said, adding that last year's total disbursement of loans was Tk 204.89 crore for the purpose.

The total outstanding loans as on February 28, 1998 was Tk 1212.96 crore, of which, Tk 720.28 crore as overdue, the default rate being 59.38 per cent, the press release said.

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Hawkers demonstrating inside the New Market in the city yesterday protesting their eviction by the shop owners' association. — Star photo

Cabinet for repeal of some 40 laws made between 1948 & '57

By Staff Correspondent

The weekly Cabinet meeting yesterday approved in principle a draft bill seeking repeal of some 40 laws and amendments to some 50 others enacted between 1948 and 1957.

The draft bill — Bangladesh Laws (Revision and Declaration, second amendment) Bill, 1998 — also seeks changes in 14 laws in conformity with the 'terms and expressions' of independent Bangladesh.

The Cabinet meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, asked the law minister to go ahead with the task and seek final approval of the Cabinet later.

With the declaration of the country's independence in March 1971, Bangladesh inherited around one thousand laws enacted between 1836 and 1971 by the then governments.

But a number of those laws had been in practice till the Laws Revision and Declaration Act, 1973 was enacted by the first parliament. Under the Act, a good number of laws enacted between 1836 and 1896 were declared redundant, some were repealed and some were amended to give conformity with the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state.

Another law was enacted in 1974 under which some of the laws enacted between 1897 and 1947 were declared irrelevant, some repealed and some were amended. In both the cases, the steps were taken following suggestions of two review committees headed by bureaucrats.

However, with no further initiative by the successive governments, the old laws enacted between 1947 and 1971 remained unscrutinised in general, although many of the laws

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Second Round Block Bidding Recommendations finalised

Star Report

The final report on the outcome and recommendations of the Second Round Block Bidding was submitted to the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Sunday.

A meeting on the report was held yesterday with the Principal Secretary in the chair.

Sources said, according to that report US joint venture Chevron-Texaco would be given one month extra time to accept the government's proposal for their partnership with Irish company Tullow in Block 9.

Small companies like Hondo and Nikko Resources would be asked to discontinue negotiations. Another small US company Pangaea, which was offered Block 8, would be asked to bring in a big partner. OMB of Austria. This proposal was earlier made by Pangaea itself.

Oil-giant Shell Oil and its British partner Cairn which were offered blocks 5 and 10, US company Enron which was offered Block 6 and US companies Unocal-Triton which were offered Block 7 would be called to finalise negotiations.

Negotiations will continue with Maersk Olie of Holland, which was offered Block 19. Maersk had disagreed with a number of clauses in the model production sharing contract (PSC), specially those related with taxation. Before finalising negotiations with Maersk, these issues must be addressed first, the report said.

The negotiations were scheduled to be finalised by December 15 last. But it could not make much progress due to a government effort to find Irish company Tullow a big partner in Blocks 9 and 11. Government

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Cattle market Supply rises, prices seem 'reasonable'

By Staff Correspondent

All entry points of the city yesterday witnessed unusual rush of incoming vehicles and traders coming on foot, bringing in cattle for the markets.

Supply of cattle at Gabtoli, Banani, Dhanmondi and Hazaribagh markets steadily rose as the day progressed. In the afternoon, some market boundaries were extended upto the adjacent roads.

All the entry points along with flood protection embankment from Lalbagh to Nababerg near Mirpur Zoo, traders and farmers were seen taking their cattle towards the inner city markets.

At Adabar, Mohammadpur.

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FBCCI proposal at pre-budget discussion

Withdraw VAT on small units, cut duty on raw materials

In a pre-budget discussion with NBR, the FBCCI yesterday put forward various proposals on tax, VAT and income tax, including a proposal for withdrawing VAT on small industrial units for generating employment and developing local infrastructure, reports UNB.

According to the FBCCI proposals, the difference of duty between basic raw materials and finished products should be at least 30 per cent.

Keeping the duty on finished products stable at 42.5 per cent, the duty on industrial raw materials and intermediate products should be reasonably lowered, FBCCI president Yusuf Abdullah Harun suggested.

He said the 2.5 per cent development surcharge imposed on industrial raw materials, capital machinery and machinery parts should be withdrawn. Minimum duty (7.5 per cent) may be imposed on all kinds of imports needed for BMRE of industrial units.

The present 10 per cent duty (import duty 2.5 per cent, licence fee 2.5 per cent, advance income tax 2.5 per cent, development surcharge 2.5 per cent) on textile, spinning, weaving, dyeing and finishing should be lowered to 2.5 per cent in order to develop backward linkage in the textile sector by 2005.

Duty free import of cotton should be allowed till 2005, the Federation of the Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI) suggested in the meeting held at the chamber's conference room.

The FBCCI opined that 80 per cent earnings of the VAT come from 6-10 sectors and imports. Therefore, VAT should be withdrawn on small industrial units for generating employment and developing local infrastructure.

VAT should be withdrawn from garments sector and life saving drugs, it said.

Small units cannot cope with VAT collection and administration, the FBCCI chief said adding that as such modern technique of revenue management has not emerged and repression, corruption and bureaucratic harassment are increasing gradually.

Turnover tax should be reduced from 4 to 2 per cent, he said expressing the hope that reduction of duty and elimination of complexities should ensure collection of revenue.

Harun said necessary arrangement should be made to deposit VAT in all branches of Sonali Bank, including Bangladesh Bank.

He also suggested that officials concerned, company, exporter and importer should be punished according to the Customs Act if it is proved that they

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GMG Airlines start operation

Ensure flight security as per int'l standard: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said involvement of the private sector in the air services will not only meet the increasing demand of the people, but also create a healthy atmosphere of competition, reports UNB.

The air service sector has been opened up for the private entrepreneurs in the wake of growing demand of the people," she said inaugurating the third private airliner of the country at the VIP lounge of Dhaka International Airport.

The GMG Airlines went into operation with a 37-seater Canadian aircraft Dash-8. It will operate services to Chittagong, Sylhet and Jessore by two Dash-8 aircraft.

One of the aircraft has been named after Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Addressing the function, Hasina said the government after assuming power has increased the infrastructural facilities in the civil aviation sector.

"We have formulated a policy with lucrative incentives for the private air transportation. The private sector is also taking part in plane, helicopter and in-

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BGMEA move for discarding hartal as a means of protest

By Nazmul Ashraf

Exporters of readymade garments, the country's leading foreign exchange-earning sector, have taken a move for an understanding between the ruling Awami League and the opposition BNP on giving up hartal as a means of protest.

Top leaders of the BGMEA yesterday made a proposal to BNP chief Begum Khaleida Zia in this regard and also sought an appointment with government leaders on the issue, said BGMEA president Mostafa Gollam Quddus. "We hope to meet the ruling party sometime after

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Pakistan tests 'Ghauri' missile

ISLAMABAD, Apr 6: Pakistan today carried out a "successful" flight test of its new surface-to-surface missile with a range of 1,500 kilometres (937 miles), officials said, reports AFP.

The "Ghauri" missile is the latest version of the Pakistani built HATF series, they said.

Ghauri or HATF-V, can carry a payload of 700 kilograms, they said.

The test represents "a step forward in Pakistan's indigenous missile and satellite launch programmes," an official statement said.

UNB adds: "We have developed this in terms of our own security needs," Pakistan's foreign ministry spokesman, Altaf Tariq said at a briefing that followed the announcement of the test. "I don't think it is specific to anyone... Rather it is Pakistan-defence specific."

When asked whether the newest missile in Pakistan's arsenal could deliver a nuclear weapon, Tariq said, "anything which flies can carry any kind of missile."

India's foreign ministry was reluctant to comment on the test.

"As of now we are awaiting the full facts and will make a comment at a suitable time," said Pawan Verma, a spokesman for the Indian foreign ministry in New Delhi. He didn't elaborate.

India already has tested a similar surface-to-surface missile, which is also believed capable of delivering a nuclear weapon. When India tested its missile, Pakistan warned that a missile arms race on the subcontinent could result.

It wasn't immediately clear when Pakistan would deploy its newest missile. Right now, Tariq said, "it's in the research and development stage."

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Jhenidah BCL leader stabbed to death

From Our Correspondent

JHENIDAH, Apr 6: Local Chhatra League leader Shafigul Islam Mome succumbed to stab injuries on the way to Dhaka last night, police and family sources said.

Babu, another activist of BCL was also allegedly stabbed by the members of a rival faction. They were picked up from Jhenidah Government KC College gate and taken to Paglakana Road in the town and stabbed severely.

Both of them were rushed to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital and then sent to Dhaka immediately for treatment.

Body of Mome was brought back to Jhenidah and buried at the central graveyard after Asr prayers today.

Meanwhile, a group of agitated young men today attacked motor vehicles shop of AL leader and local pourasabha chairman Anisur Rahman Khoka and damaged some vehicles in protest of killing of Mome.

Earlier the young men brought out a mourning procession and paraded the streets of the town with the body of Mome.

India to increase defence spending

GUWAHATI, Apr 6: India will increase military spending in its next budget, Defence Minister George Fernandes said today, reports AFP.

Fernandes, who took office last month in a new Hindu nationalist-led coalition government, told reporters in his eastern town that soldiers along the borders had to be better equipped.

"Defence outlay needs to be increased, there are no two questions about it," he said.

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নববর্ষের উপহার

ঢাকা-চট্টগ্রামের মধ্যে বিরতিহীন ট্রেন

সুবর্ণ এক্সপ্রেস

রাজধানী ঢাকা আর সমুদ্র বন্দর চট্টগ্রাম। দেশের অর্থনৈতিক কর্মকাণ্ডের দুই প্রাণকেন্দ্রের মধ্যে যোগাযোগকে আরও নিবিড় ও আনন্দময় করতে বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে ১৩ বৈশাখ চালু করছে একটি দ্রুতগামী বিরতিহীন অন্তঃসংগম ট্রেন। মহানগরীর উত্তরাঞ্চলের যাত্রীদের সুবিধার জন্য বিমান বন্দর রেল স্টেশনেও ট্রেনটি থামবে ও সেখানে টিকেট ক্রয় করা যাবে। এই ট্রেনের প্রতিটি কামরায় থাকবে শোভন শ্রেণীর সম্পূর্ণ নতুন আরামদায়ক চেয়ার। থাকবে যাত্রীসেবার নিয়োজিত প্রশিক্ষণপ্রাপ্ত ইয়ার্ডের আর পছন্দমতো খাবার ও পানীয়ের ব্যবস্থা। আপনার যাত্রাকে আরো সুখময় করার প্রয়াস থাকবে পাবলিক এন্ডেস সিস্টেমে ভেসে আসা আলতো গানের সুরের মূহুরার।

মাত্র ১৫০ টাকা ভাড়ায় ৫ ঘণ্টায় ঢাকা-চট্টগ্রাম

চট্টগ্রাম ছাড়বে সকাল ৭টা, ঢাকা পৌছবে বেলা ১২টা
ঢাকা ছাড়বে বিকেল ৫টা, চট্টগ্রাম পৌছবে রাত ১০টা ৫ মিনিটে

বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে
আপনার আহ্বাই আমাদের অনুপ্রেরণা