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Govt-PCJSS talks begin

By Special Correspondent

Talks between the government and the Barabati Chhatra-gana Jana Sanghat Samity (PCJSS) began yesterday evening in the city in an effort to remove differences between the two sides on the four bills placed in the Jatiya Sangsad for implementing the CHT peace agreement.

The meeting followed a request from the PCJSS on Wednesday.

The PCJSS complained that the government's failure to mobilise domestic resources, a bridled spending and a much lower availability of external resources, sources said.

Even the size of the next ADP has been planned lower than this year's outlay. "This looks pragmatic in view of the serious shortfall in ADP spending this year," one source said.

See Page 12 Col 7

'Pragmatic budget' for '98-99 being planned

Govt likely to fix lower ADP outlay, revenue target

By Inam Ahmed

The Finance Ministry envisages a very meagre growth of 1.20 per cent in revenue collection for the next year against an ambitious 20 per cent growth target in the current fiscal year's budget.

For fiscal 1998-99, the revenue collection target has been fixed around Tk 19,860 crore against Tk 19,624 crore for the current financial year which has also been planned to be scaled down to Tk 18,300 crore in the revised budget.

On the other hand, the planned revenue expenditure growth is 6.4 per cent for the next budget. This is also lower than this year's 20 per cent planned growth. Against this fiscal's Tk 14,544 crore expenditure, it has preliminarily planned a Tk 15,485 crore revenue expenditure for the next financial year.

At the same time, the government has taken a very cautious stance regarding availability of external resources in the next year's budget. It has calculated only Tk 6,300 crore external resources against Tk 6,779 crore for this financial year. The planned amount is closer to the revised Tk 6,370 crore external resource availability this year.

The government has planned a much slimmer ADP for the next financial year. only Tk 11,900 crore against this year's Tk 12,800 crore. This slender-looking ADP reflects a realisation of the fact that there has been a big shortfall in ADP implementation this year. This year's ADP has been revised at Tk 10,900 crore.

According to the sources, the government is expecting a Tk 820 crore shortfall in NBR tax receipts this fiscal and another Tk 500 crore shortfall in non-tax receipts. Moreover, shortfall is expected in collection of non-NBR tax receipts like car registration fee, land development tax, registration etc.

Myanmar FM leaves for home

No date set to resume Rohingya repatriation

By Staff Correspondent

Negotiations for resumption of repatriation of the remaining 21,000 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh will start soon through diplomatic channel and Myanmar will reopen reception centres at its border to take back its nationals.

This was said at a joint press conference addressed by visiting Foreign Minister of Myanmar U Ohn Gyaw and his Bangladesh counterpart Abdus Samad Azad at Zia International Airport in the city yesterday.

The press conference was held prior to the departure of Gyaw at the end his three-day official visit to Bangladesh.

Official talks between the foreign ministers of the two countries held in Dhaka on Friday, however, could not set any date for resumption of the long-stalled repatriation process.

Gyaw told newsmen that his country would take necessary steps with regard to 7,000 cases already cleared by it and would apply the same principles in giving clearances to another 9,000 cases.

Regarding 252 Myanmar nationals awaiting repatriation after completion of their terms in Bangladesh-jail, Gyaw said the Myanmar Embassy in Dhaka would interview them and take appropriate action in due course. He brushed aside any fresh influx.

Abdus Samad Azad said that after necessary clearance from See Page 12 Col 4



U Ohn Gyaw

Liquor poisoning

3 more die, 65 still under treatment

By Staff Correspondent

With the death of three more persons, the toll from Tuesday's liquor poisoning at Gaibandha, rose to 65 yesterday.

The three persons died at the Rangpur Medical College Hospital, our Rangpur Correspondent reported. At least 65 people are undergoing treatment at different hospitals and clinics in Rangpur and Gaibandha. RMCH director told The Daily Star Correspondent that all the 28 ailing persons in the hospital are improving.

Our Gaibandha Correspondent reported that the situation at Gaibandha improved as no death was reported yesterday till filing of the report at around 10 pm. Police recovered 80 bottles of liquor from a bush at Muhuripara in the town. They have launched a massive drive to recover poisonous liquor.

Our correspondents also reported. See Page 12 Col 6

85pc tap water contaminated

WASA survey

By Mizan Ali

Eighty-five per cent of the water samples of Dhaka WASA, collected from different city areas, have been found to be contaminated with disease-causing coliform micro-organism, according to tests conducted by the WASA.

"In some areas the coliform count was found as high as 130 per 100 ml water. The normal reading should be absolutely zero," said a source quoting the test report.

"Only 15 per cent of the samples were found to be containing zero level coliform count. Coliform count indicates possible presence of disease-causing micro-organism," he said. The test, done on samples collected from 250 spots, were conducted recently.

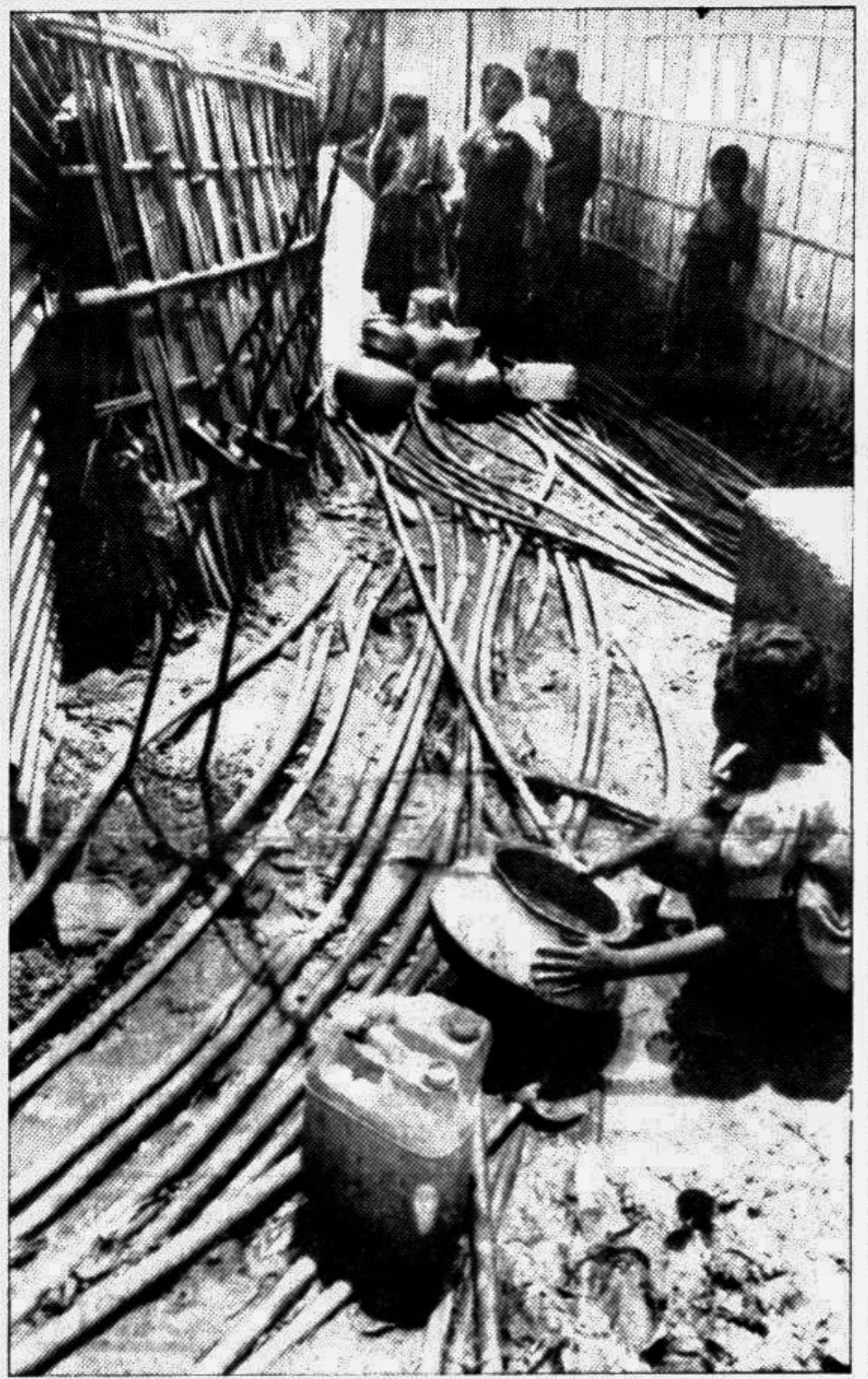
Part of the WASA's supply system which is based on surface water coming from three existing water treatment plants is creating health hazard as many of the pollutants discharged by industries cannot be removed through the conventional water treatment process, the sources said.

Of the daily water supply of 870 million litre by Dhaka WASA, 94 per cent comes from its 227 deep tubewells while the rest flow from the existing three surface water treatment plants.

Another study on leak detection, carried out by the WASA in Dhanmondi, revealed that 25 per cent of the water in the area was lost due to leak in pipes.

"When a supply pipe is leaked near a sewer or drainage line, the water can be easily contaminated," commented another WASA official.

Prof Feroze Ahmed, of the Civil Engineering Department of BUET, when contacted, said, See Page 12 Col 3



Unauthorised connections through garden pipes from WASA's supply line at Doara Para in the city's Mirpur area. — Star photo by Anisur Rahman

BNP's sit-in in front of DESA Bhaban today

The city unit of Bangladesh National Party (BNP) will stage sit-in demonstration in front of DESA Bhaban today at 11 am protesting the 'unbearable' loadshedding, reports UNB.

The demonstration is part of a month-long programme to protest inadequate supply of electricity, water, gas price hike, killing, repression on women and police excess.

City BNP convener Sadek Hossain Khoka, MP, has urged the leaders, workers and the people in general to join the sit-in demonstration in front of Ramna Restaurant at 10-30 am.

Biman DC-10 'falls sick' at Rome

By Special Correspondent

A DC-10 aircraft of the Bangladesh Biman, which developed problems in its engine and hydraulic system at Rome Airport on Thursday night, is expected to fly back to Dhaka in a couple of days, Biman sources said yesterday.

The trouble forced Biman to reschedule its international flights, including the Kuwait-Bahrain bound BG 041, which is leaving at 8 am on Monday instead of 7.45 pm today, the airline regretting the delay said.

Biman sources said the aircraft on its way to London reported the trouble after landing. See Page 12 Col 2

26 women, children rescued in Jessore

BENAPOLE, Apr 18: Twenty-six people including women and children were rescued by the BDR from village Ghatpara of Sharsha thana while being trafficked to India today, reports UNB.

The rescued people include 19 men, five women and two children were brought from different parts of Cox's Bazar district.

Acting on a tip-off, BDR personnel of Benapole camp rescued the people from den of traffickers in the village.

They were handed over to Sharsha police.

Indian frigates arrive Ctg today

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Apr 18: Two Indian navy frigates, INS Tir and INS Krishna, will arrive in Chittagong on April 19 on a three-day goodwill visit, according to a press release issued by the office of the Deputy High Commissioner of India here.

The visit by Indian frigates is taking place after a gap of six years, the press release said.

INS Tir is commanded by Captain P Sengupta while INS Krishna is commanded by P K Chatterjee.

Wednesday's incident in JS Reconciliation move

By Nazmul Ashraf and Reaz Ahmad

Moves are underway for a reconciliation between the Speaker and the BNP lawmakers after Wednesday's pandemonium in the Jatiya Sangsad, sources both in the ruling and the major opposition parties said.

The BNP lawmakers hurled paper missiles and abuses at the Speaker and damaged TV cameras on his rostrum while protesting denial of the floor to them to speak on hartal incidents on that day.

Despite the Speaker's warning for action against 14 BNP lawmakers for Wednesday's incident, any punitive action is unlikely, Awami League sources said.

"Blacking out BNP from the proceedings of the parliament on Thursday is thought to be a punishment to the opposition party," a top AL leader said, asking not to be named.

"It is unlikely that the Speaker would apply articles 15 and 16 of the JS Rules of Procedure to punish the BNP lawmakers, responsible for Wednesday's events," a source close to the Speaker said.

BNP Vice-President MK Anwar, who blamed the Speaker's "partisan role" for Wednesday's incident, said "It was childishness" that the Chair did not act. See Page 12 Col 1

BAU confers DSc on Dr. Borlaug 'Civilisation can't survive if agriculture collapses'

MYMENSINGH, Apr 18: Bangladesh Agricultural University today conferred honorary DSc Degree on the world renowned agriculture scientist and Nobel laureate Dr Norman Ernest Borlaug, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina handed over the certificate of the degree to Dr Borlaug at a function at the Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin auditorium of BAU this morning.

The conferment of the degree was arranged through the first special convocation of BAU. Earlier, the Prime Minister led the convocation procession joined by 384 BAU teachers, including the Vice-Chancellor.

Recalling the contribution of Dr Borlaug, the Prime Minister felicitated the Nobel laureate for his lifelong service for the cause of world peace and human welfare.

"Bangladesh owes in particular among the beneficiaries to your genius in respect of HYV wheat cultivation," she said adding that "Bangladesh aspires to attain the goal of self-sufficiency in food".

Dr Borlaug thanked the Prime Minister for giving him the honour and said civilisation of a country cannot be sustained if its agriculture collapses.

Dr Borlaug is called the pioneer of "Green Revolution" for developing HYV wheat.

In her address Hasina also called upon the agricultural scientists to pay more attention in innovative work to bring the crop production system and See Page 12 Col 4

Collapse of auditorium beam Shilpakala sues 15 but builders allege sabotage

By Staff Correspondent

Construction work of the Jatiya Nattayashala has been postponed as the authorities concerned brought allegations against the builders, supervisors and about the structural design.

In a second such incident within six months, a beam of the under-construction three-storey building collapsed Friday leaving at least ten workers injured.

Construction work of the building which began in 1996 was scheduled to be completed by next month, sources said. The venue was selected for the D-8 conference, scheduled to be held in Dhaka in October this year, sources said.

Director General of the Shilpakala Academy Azad Rahman filed a case against 15 persons of the construction and consultant companies following the incident.

There may be negligence on the part of the supervisors, lack of necessary precautionary measures on the part of the contractors and technical flaws in the construction work, the DG alleged in the complaint filed with the Ramna thana.

Project Builders, the construction company of the Tk 22 crore project, however, claimed that there was no negligence on the part of the construction workers or the officials and engineers of the construction company.

Neither was there any engineering flaws as the whole thing was approved by the project consultants and the departments concerned, a director of the company, Obaidullah said.

"We started the casting work only after getting clearance from the consultants that the See Page 12 Col 1

Govt even bluffed PCJSS, says Khaleda

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday accused the government of breaking its commitments to the people one after another, reports UNB.

"The government has even bluffed those with whom it signed the agreement on Chittagong Hill Tracts. It has fallen into a big problem as the bills placed in parliament is inconsistent with the agreement," she said.

"The opposition leader was speaking at a function at 29 Minto Road, where a large number of leaders and workers of the Chittagong Dock Sramik League joined the Jatiyatatabdi Sramik Dal, the labour front of See Page 12 Col 2 .

Rape attempt on woman: 4 held

By Staff Correspondent

A 27-year-old widow was allegedly beaten by a group of young men while trying to rape her inside a room at New Market in the city yesterday.

Dhanmondi police said the woman complained that a gang of young men proposed to have sex with her at about 10.30 am. They beat the woman as she refused, police sent quoting the FIR, filed by the victim.

The young woman, an embroidery worker, was attacked when she went to collect her wages from a shop in New Market.

The victim later went to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for treatment of injuries in her leg, hospital sources said.

Police arrested four persons as Siraz, Ripon, Rubel and Faruk — in connection with the incident. They are likely to be produced before the CMM's court today, police said.

SSC examinee commits suicide

JESSORE, Apr 18: An SSC examinee of Keshabpur Pilot High School center here committed suicide today after being expelled from the examination, reports UNB.

Hospital sources said the student, identified as Yunus Ali, 16, of Narayanpur High School and son of Khoda Box of Arua village, took poison immediately after he was expelled from the examination hall.

The body was sent to Jessore General Hospital for autopsy.

Terrorists' den raided at Ctg, none held

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Apr 18: Police raided a hide-out of terrorists at Mehdiabagh in the city last night and recovered a cut-rifle and some liquor bottles.

The terrorists fled sensing the raid in advance and none could be arrested during the operation.

Police said some identified terrorists forcibly had occupied two rooms in a house at Mehdiabagh where they used to meet at night. But the owner of the house fearing attack on his life kept silent without protest.

Meanwhile, some activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) of MES College brought out a procession protesting the crackdown by police.

AGP leader shot dead by ULFA

GUWAHATI, Apr 18: Outlawed ULFA militants shot dead a senior leader of ruling Asom Gana Parishad and his sister after storming their house at a village in Darrang district, official sources said here today, reports FTI.

Four ULFA extremists forced their way into the house of Khironananda Goswami, president of district AGP, fired at him from point blank killing him instantly, the sources said.

Businessman crushed under wheels of DCC truck

By Staff Correspondent

A 36-year-old man was killed on the spot as a DCC garbage container truck smashed his motorcycle and ran over him at around 11:30 Friday night on Abdul Ghani Road beside the Secretariat.

The victim, Samiur Rahman, a businessman by profession and a resident of Dhanmondi, was returning home from his in-law house in the old part of the city. He was going by his motorcycle along with his wife and seven-year-old son. His wife was seriously injured and their son escaped unhurt miraculously.

Sami's relatives quoted witnesses as saying that the See Page 12 Col 2

Inside Today

Article
Professor Yunus on Economics
Column: Insight by Kabir U Ahmed

South Asia and
Bill Richardson's Visit
Column: Matters Around Us by Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury
Page 4

Focus

Law and Our Rights
Jurisdictional issues under the Administrative Tribunal Act 1980; and Law Watch
Page 5

Business
'Publish names of corrupt bureaucrats, bankers'

Dhaka can tap huge potentials in border trade with Yangon, Myanmar FM tells FBCCI leaders
Pages 6, 7

55 gossip at Rajuk, draw salaries

By Morshed Ali Khan

They could not even complete the work they were assigned to do. How do they want to be absorbed in Rajuk organization?" asked a Rajuk official.

Rajuk's vehement opposition to take in trained professionals surprised others involved in city management.

"Rajuk always complained about lack of professional manpower. Why are they refusing to accommodate these people who have been trained to work in the sector?" asked a city developer who was present at the Rajuk office.

Some sources claimed that the DMDP manpower was not absorbed because many top Rajuk officials were "afraid of losing their own job." A source in Rajuk said that "many top ranking officials" in Rajuk had no required qualifications at all.

"These people feel that DMDP's professionals would take over their positions and seniority," the source said.

When contacted, Rajuk Chairman Azizul Haq said these professionals were recruited for a specific project and their absorption was at the discretion of Rajuk.

"They were supposed to leave after completion of the project but considering Rajuk's shortage of professional manpower, the process to absorb them has See Page 12 Col 8

More than 55 personnel of the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Planning (DMDP) have "nothing to do" since June 1996 because Rajuk did not absorb them into its organization after the project ended, sources concerned revealed.

The personnel — architects, engineers, town planners, economist, cartographers and other professionals — come to the office at the annex building of Rajuk and gossip over cups of tea.

"They are being paid from the Rajuk's revenue budget since July 1996.

These professionals alleged that Rajuk's top officials were "reluctant" to absorb them in the Rajuk as per one of the DMDP's components.

The Tk 16 crore World Bank aided DMDP was started in 1992 to devise the Dhaka Master Plan, Structure Plan and Detailed Area Planning (DAP) for 26 areas of the city and Narayanganj. The project ended without the last component being completed.

"The DMDP officials said detailed planning for only two areas has been completed. "There is no progress because we do not feel like working in such an uncertain situation," said an official.

Several Rajuk officials termed the demand for their absorption totally unrealistic.

Natore BNP procession attacked: 15 injured

From Our Correspondent

NATORE, Apr 18: At least 15 BNP leaders and activists were injured, nine seriously, when a group of armed men attacked a BNP procession in front of Uttara Supermarket in the town this afternoon, police and witnesses said.

Of the seriously injured, BNP leaders Advocate Abdul Quader and Jalauddin, Jubo Dal leader Nasim Khan and Jatiyatatabdi Chhatra Dal leader Aftabuddin received bullet injuries while BNP activists Dr Momenul Hossain, Faruk and Toton received injuries from cocktail blasts.

They were rushed to the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) for treatment. Others were treated at different local clinics.

Local BNP leaders at a press conference in the evening claimed that "the terrorists of the ruling Awami League (AL) attacked the procession".

When contacted over telephone, district AL president Advocate Sazedin Rahman, however, denied the allegations.

Witnesses said that a group of about 12 armed youths chanting slogans in favour of AL, attacked the procession with firearms, cocktails and See Page 12 Col 5