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PM performs Umrah, seeks divine blessings

JEDDAH, Aug 31: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina performed umrah at the holy Ka'aba in Makkah Al Mukarramah last night, reports BSS.

The prime minister, who arrived here yesterday evening, directly went to the holy Masjidul Haram after offering two rakats of 'nafal prayer' at the conference palace where she is staying.

Moalims of the Masjidul Haram received the prime minister as she reached there in a ceremonial motorcade along with the members of her entourage.

The prime minister and her entourage performed 'tawaf' of the holy Ka'aba and then took 'sa'ee' between Safa and Marwah hills.

During 'sa'ee' — the ritual of running between Safa and Marwah, the prime minister offered 'takbeer' and 'tahlil'. She also performed other rituals, including prayers and drinking 'ab-e-zamzam'.

At the holy house of Allah, the prime minister, while offering special *munajat*, sought the blessing of Almighty Allah for

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NOT A JOY RIDE ANY MORE: Two-year-old Farida precariously perched on the shoulders of her mother whose daily routine these days is to wade through waist-deep flood waters to work and return home carrying food for the family in a container.
 — Star photo by Sk Enamul Haq

Retirement order of Biman DMD stayed

By Staff Correspondent

The High Court yesterday stayed operation of the retirement order of Lt Col (rtd) Zainal Abedin, Deputy Managing Director of the Bangladesh Biman.

He was given premature retirement on Thursday.

According to a press release issued by Khandker Mahabuddin Ahmed, the lawyer for the petitioner, the division bench of the HC comprising Justice Mohammad Mozammel Hoque and Justice A B M Khairul Haque has issued rule upon Bangladesh Biman Corporation and Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism to show cause why the retirement order issued on August 27 should not be declared to have been made and issued without lawful authority.

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NGO activists protest visit by Monsanto official

By Staff Correspondent

Activists of two NGOs demonstrated near the Sonargaon Hotel in the city yesterday protesting a "secret" visit by a top official of a US agro-chemical company, Monsanto.

Horacio Navarretti, Business Director of the company, arrived Dhaka on Sunday on a three-day visit. He is staying at the Sonargaon Hotel, officials confirmed but declined to say anything about his visit.

The demonstrators belonging to Nayakrishi Andolon and Ubining, two NGOs, carried placards that termed Monsanto a killer and dangerous company. A press release of Ubining said police intercepted the demonstrators, an allegation denied by police.

According to the demonstrators, Monsanto is in a desperate bid to market its genetically engineered seeds in Bangladesh, which are harmful for environment.

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Alternatives

The next issue of "Alternatives" on "Hazards of Paving Bills" will come out on 10 September 1998. Readers are requested to kindly send their suggestions to the following address by 7 September 1998.

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Keep TUs free from political interference: President

President Shahabuddin Ahmed yesterday stressed the need for developing an efficient, honest and forward-looking management to stop 'financial haemorrhage' in the national exchequer, reports UNB.

Addressing a seminar, he urged the authorities in both public and private sectors to take full advantage of available institutional training facilities to get their managers trained.

The day-long seminar on "Preparing Managers for 21st Century for Bangladesh" was jointly organised by Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI) and Rapport Bangladesh Limited at Hotel Sonargaon in the city.

The President, pointing to a disquieting feature in the industrial sector, said: "Appointment and promotion of managers are very often politically influenced."

Besides, he added, there is interference in the management by labour leaders who act as labour fronts of political parties.

"Eligibility of a person seeking industrial loan is sometimes determined by labour leaders and not by bank managers," he observed.

Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria, three management experts from India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka — Sharu S Rangnekar, Prof Khawaja Amjad Saeed and Upali Mahanama — addressed the inaugural session of the seminar.

President Shahabuddin recognised the right of workers to trade union for safeguarding their interests, but criticised the race to capture the office of Collective Bargaining Agent (CBA).

Referring to the government's plan to temporarily suspend trade unions in banks, he said trade unionism cannot be kept suspended for an unduly long time.

"In the interest of economic

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Action against rapists' demanded JU students threaten fast unto death

By JU Correspondent

Students of Jahangirnagar University will go on a fast unto death from Thursday if the authorities fail to take stern action against those involved in the rape of three students on the campus in the last three months.

The programme was announced at separate press conferences on the campus by leaders of the General Students' Unity (GSU) and the Ganatantrik Chhatra Oikya (GCO) yesterday.

The GSU and GCO would continue to bring out torch processions and hold rallies on the campus till Thursday to press home their demand.

The leaders also announced that the Vice Chancellor's (VC) office will be gheraoed when the JU Syndicate meets there on Thursday to decide action against the rapists.

Urging the government to enact new laws to deal with rape cases, they said the present laws were not 'adequate to contain repression on women.'

The GSU, a spontaneously formed alliance of JU students to protest incidents of rape, yesterday formed a nearly one-mile-long 'human chain' on the Dhaka-Aricha Highway, demanding action against the rapists.

Activists of Savar thana BNP and JU unit of Jatiya

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Rape in court bldg: Tania's deposition

By Court Correspondent

The minor girl who was raped in the CMM's court premises in March, gave her deposition in the Woman and Child Repression Prevention Special Tribunal, Dhaka yesterday.

In her deposition, Tania, the victim, said that on the day of the incident she was playing with Shipon, Mousumi and Ripa in the court premises.

At one stage, she said, Mora, the accused, came and took Shipon in his lap. But when Shipon got out of his lap, Mora took her in his lap, and asked her to show him the toilet, Tania added.

She went with Mora to show him the toilet where he abused her, Tania said in her deposition. Soon, she started bleeding.

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'It's high time for proper computer education'

By Staff Correspondent

Lack of proper computer education is the biggest hindrance for Bangladesh in utilising the potential of earning billions of dollars by developing and exporting software, according to computer experts.

The experts said at a seminar on "Opportunities in the IT sector" in the city yesterday that if the youths were properly educated and trained from right now, the country will tremendously benefit economically after 10 years.

If attention was not given to computer education and training now, the country would miss yet another chance to develop itself, they said.

The seminar, organised by the Young Entrepreneurs and Professionals (YEP) Forum in collaboration with The British Council and initiated by The Daily Star, was attended by some 300 young professionals and entrepreneurs.

It was addressed by Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam, Advisor of Promotion of Micro Industries, Germany, Icarda Weidinger; President of Bangladesh Computer Samity Aftab ul Islam, Secretary General of Bangladesh Association of Software and Information System Habiburrahman N Karim, Nazrul Jamil of Bangladesh Association of IT (Information technology) Training & Education, Rizwan Bin Farouq of Ax-

iom Technologies Ltd and Zakaria Swapan of Proshika Computer System.

It was also addressed by Samudra Huq of Prodeshta Net, Moin Khan of Computer Solutions, K Reza Islam of NSU, Nawab Kabir of Agni System and Q Sadat Omar of Access Telecom Ltd. YEP members Ahmed Jamil and Safi Khan conducted the programme.

Zakaria Swapan said right now there are job opportunities for four lakh computer programmers in the western countries.

He said there is a tremendous demand for programmers, analysts, system and network

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OIC, SAARC states urged to provide emergency assistance

The government yesterday urged the OIC and SAARC countries for emergency assistance to cope with the damage wrought by the floods, report agencies.

Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria, briefing ambassadors and High Commissioners of the relevant countries at the NEC conference room, said roughly 879 million US dollars (over Tk 4000 crore) will be needed in cash and kind to meet the emergency situation.

Kibria said the country needs 112 million US dollars in cash immediately for relief operations for the flood victims, 1.38 million metric tons of emergency food worth 242 million US dollars and 57,000 tons of CI sheets worth 64 million US dollars. Besides 481 million US dollars are needed for the immediate post-flood rehabilitation.

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Highway flooded, most inter-dist buses now run behind schedule

By Staff Correspondent

Traffic movement on the Dhaka-Aricha highway has slowed down due to inundation of the road at different places.

According to transport operators at the Gabtoli bus terminal, the inter-district buses on the route remain stranded at two points between Amin Bazar and Savar and at another point between Manikganj and Savar.

During a visit to the bus terminal, this correspondent found that almost all the buses arriving at Gabtoli were behind schedule. Transport operators said that they have been facing this problem since the two weeks.

"Normally, it takes about

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Mud from upstream reduced drainage capacity of rivers

By Staff Correspondent

Due to landslides in the upper regions of the Ganges, flood water this year is carrying a lot of mud which has reduced the water carrying capacity of the rivers in the downstream, said A M Chowdhury, Director of SPARSO.

"Flood situation in the downstream of the Ganges covering the regions of Bangladesh, deteriorated as the mud in the water reduced the drainage capacity of the rivers," he noted.

"The heavy rainfall in the upper regions of Ganges resulted in landslides at Rudraprayag in the foothills of Himalayas" he said, adding it also blocked Mandakini, one of the tributaries of the Ganges of some time.

The soil of the Himalayan region as a whole has become barren due to the massive deforestation, resulting in silting of the rivers downstream, he added.

Night guard murdered in city

By Staff Correspondent

A night guard of a business house was murdered at Chankhar Pool under Lalbagh thana in the city yesterday morning.

Police identified the dead as Wali Ullah, 62, son of Tona Mia of Noakhali. His body was recovered from a room of the firm.

Wali's hands were tied up and there was a *gamcha* around his mouth, police said, adding the injury marks on the body suggests that he was beaten up

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Duty cut on import of some essentials being considered

By Reaz Ahmad

The government is considering duty cut on import of certain essentials in the eventuality of price like because of their short supply in the market, official sources said yesterday.

According to market sources, supply of vegetables and spices may fall short of the domestic requirement if the floods stagger.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, a high official of the Commerce Ministry said, "As of today, we have reports of price rise of only two/three items including onion. Market prices of essentials are under constant monitoring and the government is ready to reduce import duty if situation so demands."

When asked, the official however, acknowledged that there has been little increase in prices of rice.

Citing examples of duty cut on import of rice, onion and green chilli in recent months, the official said, "All items are freely importable and we are in constant touch with Chamber bodies and other market forces to know if there is any abnormal scarcity of any item."

He, however, outright rejected the possibility of enforcing any price control saying it will be contrary to the free market economic policy pursued by the government.

Commerce Ministry officials held a meeting with representatives of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry on Sunday to assess the stock position of 'baby food'. The meeting expressed satisfaction over the stock position and prices of 'baby food'. Commerce Secretary Alamgir Faruq later told the correspondent.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Food Ministry at a meeting on Sunday

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Water to recede slowly till next full moon

Country's overall flood situation is likely to improve slowly till next full moon, excepting in the districts along the river Padma, experts forecast yesterday, reports UNB.

However, an expert, said the improvement depends on low trend of tide in the sea and also quantum of rainfall in the basins both in and outside the country.

Relief Ministry control room said the situation yesterday deteriorated in six districts while it remained unchanged in 14 others, including Dhaka, and improvement was observed in 14 districts.

According to Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre slight improvement may take place in and around Dhaka and improvement in north-eastern areas in Sylhet region and south-eastern hill basin.

A status report of the FFWC at Water Development Board said water level in and around Dhaka city was receding slowly with further fall or static flow of the Turag and Buriganga.

But an engineer said the fall is apparently not visible in the capital as water became stagnant in many places and could not flow due to clogged drainage system.

Meanwhile, the FFWC report said water level of high tide and low tide in the sea was

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10pc of prime land in city flooded

By Staff Correspondent

At least 10 per cent of the 'prime land' under Dhaka Integrated Flood Protection Project, Phase I, has been flooded because of 'failure' of the authorities concerned in properly implementing the project, some high officials told The Daily Star yesterday.

The inundated areas include parts of Gulshan, Banani, Madhubagh and Hajjipara. The project covers 140sq km of the 265 sq km city area.

Two third of the road length in the city area, and 70 per cent of the houses have been inundated by flood water.

Most of these areas are not covered by the Project Phase I, officials at the flood control room said.

The Water Development Board (WDB), Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) and Dhaka WASA are responsible for implementation of the project.

The WDB's responsibility is to close the sluice gates at the appropriate time. BADC is to provide required number of pumps while WASA is to operate

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Will fortune smile on Sahera's sick baby?

By Naimul Haq

Sahera Khatun from Iswardi in Pabna district with her nine-month-old baby left Dhaka Shishu Hospital (DSH) the second consecutive day after falling to see the doctor at the outpatient department (OPD).

"I travelled all the way from Iswardi last week to see a doctor at DSH for my son suffering from pneumonia but due to heavy rush of patients, I haven't got any chance to see the doctor yet," she said.

Doctors at Pabna Sadar Hospital referred Sahera's son to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), where all beds in paediatric ward were occupied.

DMCH authorities referred the case to DSH.

Sahera said on Saturday she may have to wait for another week to see the doctor. "I will keep on trying to get my son admitted to the hospital. He is in a very serious condition."

Director of DSH Prof Manzoor Hussain, when asked about the load of patients, said, "DSH is the only hospital in the country where full-fledged paediatric facilities are available. So the number of patients overwhelms our capacity."

He said, "Due to our limited capacity, we have to refuse a lot of patients who need medical attention."

So many patients from districts as well as from DMCH, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, Pangu Hospital, Mitford Hospital and other city hospitals are referred

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20th founding anniversary of BNP today

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has decided to observe its 20th founding anniversary today in a simple ceremony due to the country's deteriorating flood situation, reports UNB.

On the occasion, relief materials will be distributed among the flood victims across the country.

BNP leaders will distribute relief materials in all thanas of the country.

Other programmes of the day are hoisting party flag atop its central and unit offices in the morning, placing wreaths at the mazar of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman at 9 am.

BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia will place wreaths at the mazar and offer *fateha* prior to her visit to Hatkhola and Dohar to distribute relief among flood victims.

Meanwhile, Begum Zia yesterday urged all political parties and individuals to stand by the flood victims.

In a statement marking the 20th founding anniversary of BNP, she also called upon the patriotic and nationalist forces

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Swapan joins BNP People have rejected JP, says Khaleda

Referring to some Jatiya Party leaders without naming them, BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday said some of the politicians tried to emerge as an alternative nationalist force to BNP but the people rejected them for their wrong politics, reports UNB.

She was speaking at her official residence yesterday evening on the occasion of re-joining BNP by Shafiqul Ghani Swapan who had left the party in early 80s to join Jatiya Party of General HM Ershad.

Begum Zia said Jatiya Party was launched with 18-point programme in place of BNP's 19-point in a bid to identify themselves as nationalist force. Their politics proved wrong and the people rejected them, she added.

"Many of them are now realising their mistakes and returning to BNP which has been

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Rubel murder CID IO warned by court for sending AC Akram to hospital

By Staff Correspondent

The CID Investigating Officer (IO) of Rubel murder case was warned by the Court of Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate yesterday for taking the main accused, A C Akram Hussain, to the PG Hospital during his remand without prior permission from the court.

Additional CMM Habibur Rahman also observed that the IO, Munshi Atkur Rahman, did not seek permission from the court at proper time for taking Akram to the prison cell of the hospital.

The warning was issued when the IO went to the court to submit his reply to the show-cause notice served on him on August 24.

The IO was asked to reply within seven days why Akram was sent to the PG Hospital during his remand without the court's permission.

The notice was issued following a petition from the lawyers of Rubel's father on August 24, when the six accused detained in jail were produced in the court.

In his reply Rahman informed the court that he could not seek permission from the court as it was not open at that time. Akram fell ill at about

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Dhutura poisoning Maid takes away ornaments worth Tk 14 lakh

By Staff Correspondent

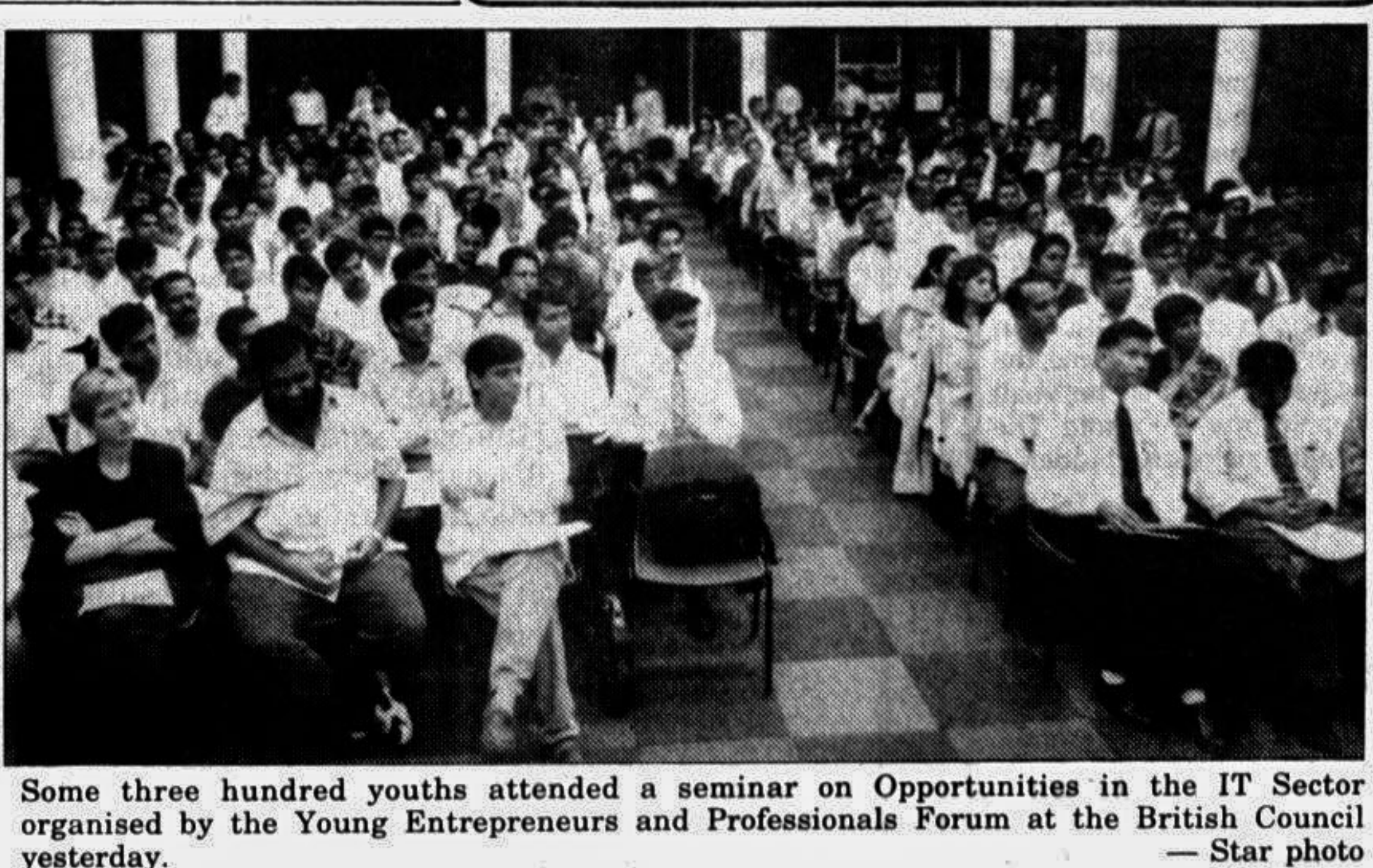
A maid yesterday took away gold ornaments worth about Tk 14 lakh after mistaking Dhutura poison with the food of the inmates of a house in Gulshan Sunday night.

Police, quoting the FIR filed in this connection, said that a relative of the family last morning found all members of Itefkarul Alam's family in an unconscious condition and Sahana, the maid, was missing.

The poison affected family members were admitted to different city hospitals and clinics. Later, it was found that Sahana took away gold ornaments worth about Tk 14 lakh.

Police could not arrest Sahana till filing of this report last night. A case was filed with Gulshan thana in this regard yesterday.

— Star photo



Some three hundred youths attended a seminar on Opportunities in the IT Sector organised by the Young Entrepreneurs and Professionals Forum at the British Council yesterday.