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## Repatriation of Rohingyas resumes today

COX'S BAZAR, Nov 24: The repatriation of Rohingyas to their homeland resumes tomorrow, reports APB. Local administration sources said 47 Rohingyas of seven families are likely to return to their homesteads in Arakan province of Myanmar on the first day of the repatriation. They will be returning voluntarily, the sources added. The refugees would cross the river Naaf from their camp on the Teknaf frontier under the supervision of UNHCR officials, the Deputy Commissioner of Cox's Bazar and other local officials.

No repatriation took place since July 16, 1997. The repatriation process made a headway following the discussion between Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad and Myanmar officials in Yangon during his visit to Myanmar on November 12.

Concerned officials in Dhaka indicated that the repatriation of the Myanmar refugees would be completed by the first quarter of the next (1999) year. Then the two remaining camps for the refugees will be dismantled.

## Farashuddin takes over as BB Governor

Dr Mohammad Farashuddin, the new governor of Bangladesh Bank, took over the charge yesterday, three days after his appointment came into effect, reports APB.

He replaces Lutfar Rahman Sarkar, who went on retirement on Saturday completing his two-year contract. Farashuddin, a former civil servant, has been appointed head of the country's central bank on a three-year contract, said a Bangladesh Bank press release.

Prior to his new assignment, he was Vice-Chancellor of the East-West University. He was also the chairman of the Small Bank Board of Directors. Farashuddin also served as the UNDP resident representative to Iran, the Philippines and the Maldives.

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# PM clears Oxy's PSC extension

**By Sharier Khan**

US oil company Occidental is getting extension of its Production Sharing Contract (PSC) for blocks 12 and 13 within a few days, sources said.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, also the energy minister, cleared the file a few days ago. The file was sent to the energy ministry, which asked Petrobangla to prepare the extension agreement.

The PSC for these two blocks expired in January 11 last as the US company failed to fulfil its minimum work commitment. Apart from failure to drill one single exploration well successfully, Occidental's poor safety measures for the Magurchhara well had been responsible for the massive blow out.

Occidental sought extension of the contract only six days before its expiry. Although there was no provision in the PSC for the extension, the government in February-March agreed to extend it on condition that the US company must compensate all the damages due to the Magurchhara explosion.

Accordingly, Occidental agreed and compensated various damages. But it did not agree to the Department of Environment (DOE) claims of environmental damage of Tk 600 crore. Occidental argued that the damage assessment was not done on the basis of any standard criterion.

Meanwhile, the US company negotiated with Petrobangla over various amendment terms, which were proposed to be incorporated in the extended contract. The final draft was sent to the law ministry three months ago, which cleared it.

But it could not proceed further as the government refused to sign the agreement.

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## PM on politics of no-hartal Opposition's positive response sought

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday reiterated her declaration on no-hartal politics and sought a positive response to her overture from the opposition in the greater interest of the country's economic development, reports UNB.

"Let's take a positive decision against hartal and extortion... This should now be stopped for creating an enabling environment of foreign investment and economic development," she said repeating her earlier unilateral declaration that her party won't call shutdown when it would go back to opposition.

Replying to a supplementary question from Golam Farooq Ovi (JP) during PM's question hour in parliament, the Prime Minister again said Awami League would not apply the crippling tools like hartal in future since there's no need for it any more.

"I've taken the decision that we won't call hartal in order to attract foreign investment for the benefit of our economy," Hasina questioned the efficacy of opposition-sponsored general strikes particularly while the nation is reeling out of terrible floods and said there are no national issues or people's interests working behind these frequent hartals.

Defending the previous hartals called by Awami League while in opposition, Hasina said those were enforced on burning issues like restoration of democracy and people's right to vote.

"Today, democracy has been restored and a system of holding national elections under neutral caretaker government institutionalised. People got their rights back."

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## Bill to legalise transplantation of limbs, tissue in human bodies

The Jatiya Sangsad last night witnessed the introduction of a Bill seeking provisions to legalise transplantation of limbs and tissue in human body, reports BSS.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Salauddin Yusuf introduced the Bill. In the statement of reasons and objects containing the bill, the Health Minister said bill was aimed at removing different human, social and religious complexities in collecting limbs from the voluntary donors and dead persons for transplantation in the bodies of sick people.

The minister said the enactment of the Bill would play an important contribution in the field of treatment.

The house also saw the introduction of amendment proposals to the Rules of Procedure of parliament by Abdul Mannan (BNP-Dhaka), Deputy Speaker.

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## Shazneen's father ends statement in court

## 'Offence' is too weak a word to describe such a crime

**By Staff Correspondent**

An incident in which a 15-year-old girl is stabbed 22 times, then raped and killed cannot be termed a mere "offence", Lutfur Rahman, father of murdered teenager Shazneen, told the trial court yesterday as tears rolled down his cheeks.

"This is a very weak word to describe a vicious crime of this nature," he said concluding his statement as the "informant" of the brutal murder in his Gulshan residence on April-23.

In his 112-minute statement, the continuation of his first appearance in court on November 22 when he began his deposition, he narrated the incidents and events of relevance in the days leading to gruesome murder and after.

The trial is being held in the court of the Sixth Additional District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka.

Judge S K Roy adjourned the court till 3:00 pm of November 29 after the leading industrialist and head of the Transcom Group ended his deposition at 5:12 pm starting at 3:20 pm.

The defence lawyers will start cross-examining Lutfur

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# Cyclone: 200 fishermen still missing

**By Special Correspondent**

About 200 fishermen remained missing till yesterday, two days after the storm that lashed the coastal districts on Sunday, fishing industry and other sources said.

A delayed report from Shyamnagar, Sathkhira, said an unidentified woman died when a wall collapsed on her during the storm. An unspecified number of deer was also killed, our Staff Correspondent in Khulna said.

Kabir Ahmed, President of Mechanised Fishing Boat Owners Association, told reporters at Cox's Bazar that a number of boats could not take shelter in time after the alert about the storm was sounded on Sunday.

He said reports of missing fishermen were received from Kuakata to the Sundarbans. Of them, 26 fishermen from Cox's Bazar and 57 from the Sundarbans remained missing.

Major (rtd) Ziauddin, chairman of the Dubla Fishermen Group, said six non-mechanised boats with 30 fishermen were missing from Kachikhali range.

They were caught in the gale due to information gap, he added.

Officials reported that 27 fishermen at Raimangal river were also missing.

But hopes were not yet lost due to the fact that sometimes the fishermen in deep sea remain missing for days, Kabir Ahmed said.

Fishermen's relatives scanned the shores and hurried to boats returning from the Bay to gather information about their missing ones near Cox's Bazar.

Our Khulna correspondent said that there had been widespread loss to crops, shrimp farms, fishermen and wildlife, including deer.

At Dublarchar, on the tip of the Bay at the Sundarbans, at least 6,000 makeshift homes of fishermen were blown away. The fishermen also lost about 6000 maunds of half-dried fish due to the storm.

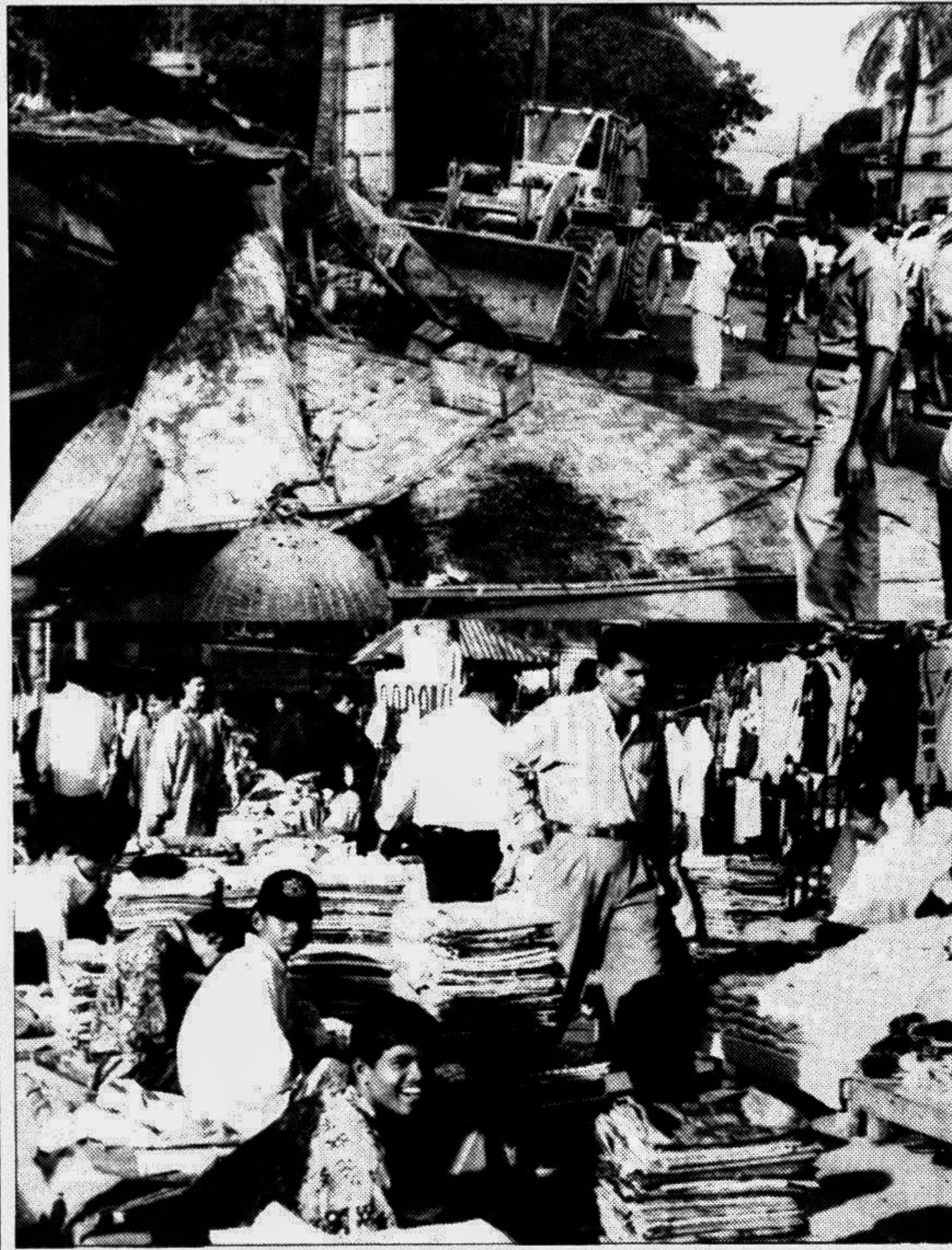
Thousands of fishermen from different coastal districts gathered at the Dublarchar early November every year and harvest the bounties of innumerable rivers, creeks and canals in the Sundarbans. They mostly dry the fish, some of which are exported.

A Naval vessel had taken some dry food for the fishermen at Dublarchar after the storm ended.

A number of deer were feared washed away by the storm and surges in the Sundarbans. Four bodies of deer were found floating in the river Shibsa on Monday morning.

Members of a rescue and relief team told The Daily Star

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**DIFFERENT STROKES:** Dhaka City Corporation sent packing some illegal shops and markets in Dhanmondi area yesterday (top) while, in stark contrast, unauthorised hawkers on pavements in Baitul Mukarram area continue to make hay much to the woes of the pedestrians.

—Star photos

## Power crisis acute in Chittagong

**From Staff Correspondent**

CHITTAGONG, Nov 24: Fresh power crisis has gripped the port city, mounting sufferings of the people side by side with crippling the economy, sources said.

PDB sources said the crisis of power became acute here after three generation centres including Raozan unit 1 and 2 and Shikabaha 60 MW unit broke down due to fault in power lines on Saturday.

However, Shikabaha unit resumed generation yesterday while the second unit of Raozan is expected to restart operation tomorrow, PDB sources added.

But it may take time to bring unit no 1 of Raozan back into operation, PDB sources hinted.

They said for the past few days Chittagong was forced to face regular loadshedding ranging from 30 MW to 40 MW against the daily requirement of over 300 MW.

Although power generation dropped here, electricity was supplied from the national grid to tackle the situation, sources said.

Meanwhile, the power crisis triggered water shortage at different parts of the city, sources added. Production in mills and factories was also hampered due to frequent loadshedding, they said.

Bangladesh garments manufacturers association sources said garment factories in Chittagong have been facing a production loss of about taka one crore a day in addition to delay in delivery.

## HC rejects bail prayer of Mukuli Begum

The High Court yesterday rejected bail prayer of Roksana Begum alias Mukuli Begum, an accused in the sensational Rubel killing case, reports APB.

The HC Division Bench comprising Justice Mohammad Golam Rabbani and Justice Muhammad Latifur Rahman, after hearing the petitioner's counsel and the government side, refused the bail plea of Mukuli Begum.

After failing to obtain bail from two lower courts — Additional Sessions Judge, first court, Dhaka, and the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka — the accused filed the bail petition with the HC.

Mukuli Begum is one of the accused in the case lodged with Ramna police after university student Shamim Reza Rubel was tortured to death in DB police custody in July last.

Senior Advocate Abdul Malek moved the bail prayer on behalf of Mukuli Begum. Assistant Attorney General Syed Abu Kowser opposed the bail petition for the state.

## Many deer die in the Sundarbans

Thousands of fishermen from different coastal districts gathered at the Dublarchar early November every year and harvest the bounties of innumerable rivers, creeks and canals in the Sundarbans. They mostly dry the fish, some of which are exported.

A Naval vessel had taken some dry food for the fishermen at Dublarchar after the storm ended.

A number of deer were feared washed away by the storm and surges in the Sundarbans. Four bodies of deer were found floating in the river Shibsa on Monday morning.

Members of a rescue and relief team told The Daily Star

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## Rice price soars again

**By Reaz Ahmad**

Prices of rice soared once again at the city markets although aman, the biggest crop of the year, is ripe enough to be harvested and being added to supply line.

Traders at one of the city's main wholesale markets acknowledged the recent price rise of the staple food blaming lower domestic production, price rise in India, hoarding and the damage that recent cyclonic storm inflicted upon standing crops.

Government, however, is still unwilling to go for OMS (open market sale) programme in spite of its claim of comfortable stock in the public reserve system.

Meanwhile, BBC radio, giving reference to a ruling party lawmaker and rice trader, reported yesterday that trucks carrying rice consignments were being hijacked.

It said the food ministry had talks with the home ministry in a bid to curb the hijacking of rice carrying trucks.

Earlier, The Daily Star was the first to report on September 15 this year that the food ministry had sought special security measures from the home ministry for safe movements of food consignments on the highways. The government acted accordingly, deploying army and navy personnel at two seaports of the country to ensure quick shipment of food-laden vessels.

But talking to rice traders at different city markets, this correspondent got an impression that with the harvesting of aman crop, a sluggish trend in import from India is prevailing.

There are also reports of lesser supply from across the border. Besides, Indians have also put a new bar on carrying

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## Battle of ballots in 4 Indian states today

**From Pallab Bhattacharya**

NEW DELHI, Nov 24: The stage is set for a fierce battle of ballots in four Indian states tomorrow.

It will be the first major test for the 8-month-old government of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee as well as Sonia Gandhi's leadership in the Congress that trying to regain its prominence.

More than eight crore voters are expected to cast their ballots to decide the fortunes of about five thousand candidates in Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Mizoram states.

Voting will start at 8 am and continue till 4 pm while counting will begin on November 27.

Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata Party and Sonia Gandhi's Congress are the major contenders for power in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi while Congress is pitted against ethnic parties in the northeastern state of Mizoram.

The elections in the four states are crucial for the BJP-led alliance ruling India as political analysts feel that a rout for it could prompt fresh alignment of political forces which may have a bearing on

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