

# The Daily Star

## on Friday

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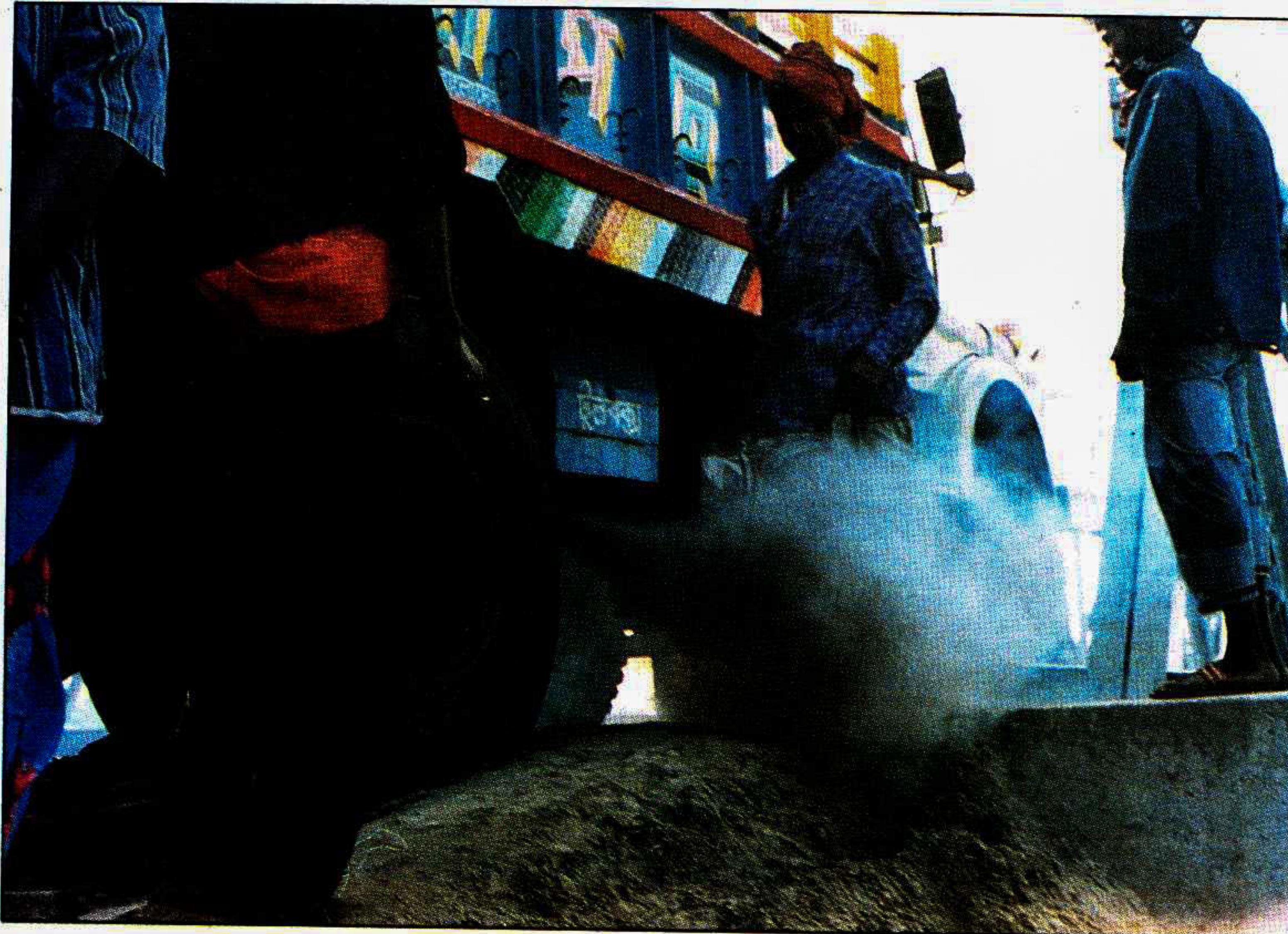
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Merchants of death

The law says vehicles spewing black smoke are not allowed on the road. That's what the law says! But who cares about the law? Not the owner of this truck, and many more like him. And the law-enforcers? They couldn't care less either.

— Star photo: AKM Mohsin

## Boost for Tejgaon property

Industrial area to be open for all commercial activities

By Morshed Ali Khan

In a reshuffle of the city's zoning pattern, the government has decided to allow almost all kinds of commercial activities in the Tejgaon Industrial Area (TIA), according to works ministry sources.

The 500-acre TIA will now be open for construction of condominiums, apartment blocks, shopping complexes, clinics and so on, according to a notification issued on December 20 by the Ministry of Housing and Public Works.

TIA was created in the early 1950's with a view to establish-

ing service-oriented industries. According to a recent Public Works Department survey, more than 60 per cent of the industries at TIA have either been closed down or lying idle for years.

With the change of industrial pattern over the years, many of the TIA industries became obsolete and were forced to shut down.

After allowing parts of Dhanmondi and Gulshan to go commercial, this is for the first time the government has changed the zoning compound

of a major city area.

The TIA originally consisted of 405 plots, each measuring about an acre. The number of plots has now come down to 354, out of which some 166 are being used for accommodating different government organisations such as the BG Press, the Polytechnic Institute, Medical Store, BRTC, Water Board and the T&T Workshops.

With the government decision, the plot owners would now be able to take up 13 diverse commercial activities. These include construction of shop-

ping malls or complexes, condominiums and apartments, offices of travel agencies, bank and insurance companies, commercial offices, display centres for industrial products, electronics, up to 30-bed clinics but not for infectious diseases, and other commercial use as per need of the local people.

The government order says that small shops could also be set up in the area. For any kind of commercial conversion the owners must seek permission from the authorities.

At least 26 per cent of the total allocation of foodgrains for Rural Development (RD) projects is being misappropriated.

In some projects, misappropriation is up to 39 per cent.

These were revealed in a recent study conducted by the Washington-based International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) under the government's Food Management and Research Support Project.

The RD projects are implemented under the Food for Work Programme (FFWP).

The Daily Star earlier reported that some 15 per cent of the foodgrains allocated for Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) programmes is being misappropriated.

The RD projects and VGD programmes are the two main outlets of the government to re-

## Opposition eyes series of hartals

By Nazmul Ashraf and Rezaul Karim

The major opposition parties have rejected the schedules for pourashava elections and could opt for a series of hartals coinciding with the three polling days as well as the key dates leading to the polls.

In a liaison meeting yesterday, BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote toughened their stance on the forthcoming pourashava polls as the Election Commission came up with the schedules leaving a four-point opposition demand unfulfilled.

The EC yesterday announced

the dates for pourashava elections staggered over three days from February 23.

As soon as the pourashava polls schedules went into circulation, the joint meeting reaffirmed their position to boycott the local elections if held with the demands unmet.

Their decision to boycott the polls aside, the four parties also discussed suggestions to go to the extent of resisting the elections if held without their participation.

They would meet again today to review the proposals for hartals before holding a press

briefing in the evening. They are also expected to draft a common declaration on their future course of action.

Sources indicated that the announcement for some of the programmes might be made to the press today.

But more important would be the clearance from the BNP standing committee, party's highest decision-making body, which will meet in the evening. The liaison meeting will follow.

Similar discussions in other parties are also likely to take place earlier in the day.

BNP secretary general Abdul

Mannan Bhuiyan kept party chief Khaleda Zia, now in Saudi Arabia, informed of the developments. He spoke to her by phone in the evening, party sources said.

As preconditions for participation, the opposition parties want the CEC to resign and the EC revamped, among other demands.

According to the four demands, announced by these parties last week, they also wanted use of ID cards in the local government polls and "release all political detainees".

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## Municipal polls schedule declared

Hena hangs tough in face of opposition demand for resignation

Election to 143 municipalities across the country, including newly formed 60, will be held in phases on February 23-25, reports UNB.

The Election Commission in a gazette notification yesterday announced the election schedule.

According to the notification, the date for submission of nomination is January 26,

scrutiny January 27 and last day for withdrawal of candidature February 3.

The security money for a

chairman candidate is Tk 4,000 while for commissioner Tk 2,000.

This is for the first time the municipal elections will be held under a code of conduct prepared by the Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Ministry.

Also for the first time female ward commissioners to 453 wards under the 143 municipalities going to the polls will be elected in direct voting. The number of total general wards is 1,359.

"I'm ready to leave my office for larger interest of the people and the country. But I'll not bow down to any illogical and undue demand," he said after announcing the schedule for February 23-25 municipal elections.

Meanwhile, Chief Election Commissioner Mohammad Abu Hena is ready to quit in greater national interest but not under any "undue and unreasonable pressures" from any quarters.

"Five per cent of the allotted foodgrains is somehow missed during delivery from the local storage depots (LSDs) to the project implementation committees (PICs)."

Rents are paid at different stages of the set-up, supervision and implementation of the project and to assure delivery of the funds. Fees paid to government officials might be 5 to 15 per cent of the value of the project.

The study said that sometimes workers under RD projects are paid in cash instead of giving them wheat. If the market price of wheat is higher than the government rate of the allocated wheat, programme officials make profit on the price difference, the study

also applauded for the 1996 general elections, said, "My position is very clear: I'm determined to continue in my constitutional office as long as I can."

The removal from a constitutional post like the CEC is possible in two ways: 1) If he resigns on his own or 2) found by the President that he cannot run the office for physical or mental incapability or gross misconduct.

Despite the local government polls being non-partisan. See Page 11

## Stealing food aid meant for the poor

By Rafiq Hasan and Reaz Ahmad

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The Daily Star earlier reported that some 15 per cent of the foodgrains allocated for Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) programmes is being misappropriated.

The RD projects and VGD programmes are the two main outlets of the government to re-

duce rural poverty. Most of the donors' food assistance is being channelled through the two outlets for years.

Around two lakh tonnes of foodgrains are channelled yearly under the RD projects in the country for building and reconstructing rural infrastructures and institutions.

Underpayment of workers,

who are generally ignorant about their wage rate, and padding of the work are the two main ways of misappropriating foodgrains under the RD projects, the IFPRI study said.

An earlier study jointly carried out by BIDS and IFPRI in 1982 also revealed a similar picture about misappropriation of foodgrains. The recent study noted that despite repeated efforts for improvement, the sit-

uation remained the same.

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noted.

If the workers are paid in cash, they get much less in terms of wheat and the quantity of wheat thus 'saved' is misappropriated, the study noted.

The study further said that workers work more than eight hours and in many cases, even 13 hours.

As overestimation of work is the major source of 'leakage', the study suggested credible pre-work and post-work surveys to check whether the required work has been done.

The study also put forward a number of recommendations including better monitoring and supervision, fixing local salary rates in cash equivalent, and paying only for the work done.

## Tough call for home-bound traffic

By Staff Correspondent



Here we come

With the Eid holidays just around the corner, homebound people crowd the jetty at Sadarghat, eager to catch the first available launch heading for the south. Pressure on the launch services has mounted heavily as the holiday season gets closer.

— Star Photo: A K M Mohsin

With the Eid-ul-Fitr round the corner, lakhs of people who will travel to the country's southern region from the city to celebrate the festival with their families are facing immense sufferings.

Motor launch is the only mode of transport for them. And they are facing serious hassles.

Booking and reservation of seats in the government-owned BIWTC vessels and those of some private launch companies were closed even one month before the Eid festival.

"When I went for booking a cabin in a Barisal-bound launch on January 1, I was advised to come after January 10. I requested the counter clerk to have my name in their register. But he refused saying they were yet to open any such register," said Munaim Ahmed, one of the sufferers.

"On January 10, the counter clerk told me there is no room to be reserved. Then I requested him for a cabin for January 17. He said it was beyond his capacity. The owner of the launch has taken the register and he will give reservations."

But, Ahmed said, he later found that launch employees were giving reservation slips to passengers at Tk 1,000 to Tk 1,200 against the rate of Tk 600. They did not mention the amounts on the reservation slips to avoid detection by law enforcement agency personnel and legal action.

Ticket touts have also taken homegoers hostage at different bus terminals and railway stations in the city, forcing them to buy tickets at exorbitant rates. They are doing this with the help of a section of transport

operators and railway employees.

Private launch owners are giving reservation only to influential people and musclemen for smooth running of their business in future, said Alamgir Hossain, a launch passenger on way to Jhalakathi.

Most of the passengers going to southern districts travel on launch decks. But touts occupy the decks as soon as the launches reach the city's Sadarghat terminal and sell "one seat" for Tk 20 to 30 or more.

Launch owners and law enforcement agency personnel hardly care to take any initiative to save the passengers from the grip of touts.

Launched by the Islamic Foundation

Prayer Timings

January 15		
Fajr	Azan	Jamaat
5-20	5-26	
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Magrib	5-38	5-38
Esha	7-00	7-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

KING'S

Pure Soyabean Oil

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Sehri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Jan	Sehri	Iftar
26			