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DITF '99: A Modern Mela

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By Iresh Zaker

As one approaches the DITF 99 trade fair, the first thing that craves attention is the tower. The tower has a lighthouse aura and seemed to be domineering over the whole event. Welcoming from afar and keeping a keen eye on all that it surveyed. There is the blimp next to it. Not a real one of course. However, suspended high above the fair, it looks cute. Lights are all around. They never fail to brighten up an event and here they are performing wonderfully. The mind is refreshed by the photons.

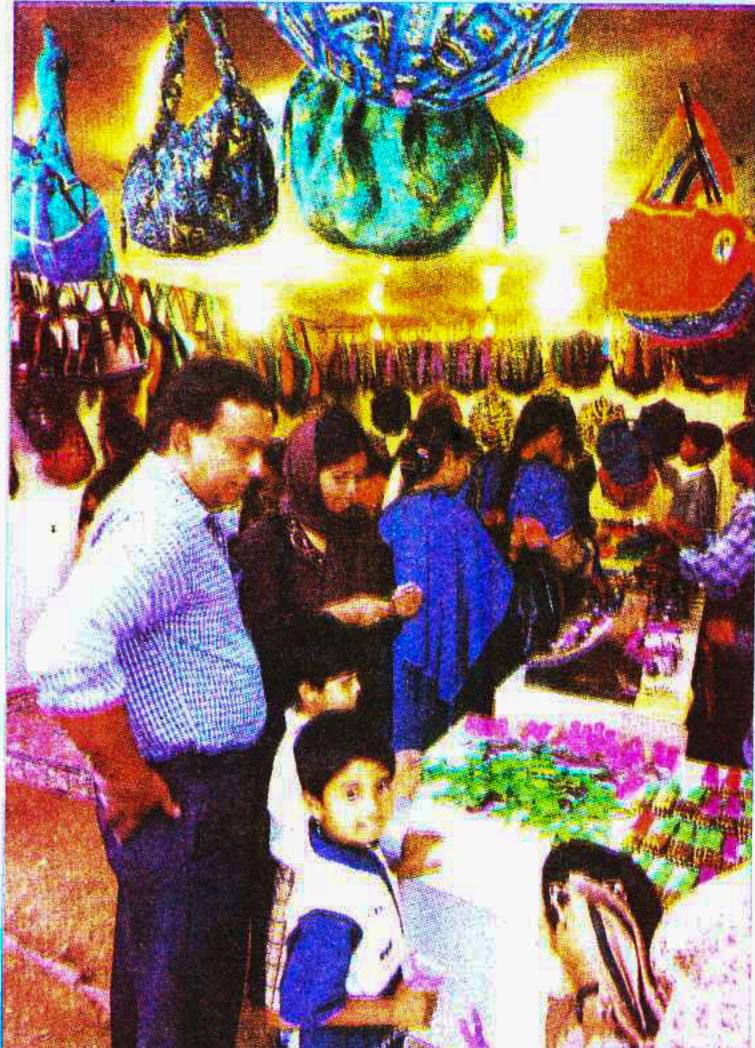
And of course there is the crowd. Crowds are a facet of urban life we have grown to accept. Indeed, Dhaka and any event in the capital are not themselves if they do not boast the congestion.

However, the relative neatness of the fair is quite impressive. The parking lot are these days.

that suddenly steps into a room full of unexpected grandeur.

Upon suitably recovering ones composure, one is faced with a dilemma about the direction to proceed in. Stalls line the circumference of the the central area. One ought to decide in favour of the beeline. In that case, one gets a decent all-round view by adequately revolving the head

The large displays or pavilions and mini-pavilions as the are called are generally impressive. The owners had obvi-



ously not been parsimonious in setting them up. It makes life difficult for a neutral visitor. All the displays were magnificent yet none was exceptional enough to exact ones initial preference. The decision has to be arbitrary.

The pavilions are, without exception, smartly set up. The architecture makes one aware that the modern era had indeed come to Bangladesh. It iss aluminium, glass and halogen ga-

He told this correspondent

from distance

places,need admission. But we

are really helpless. There are

not many beds available," Dr

have been admitted, most of

them accommodated on extra

beds arranged on request from

the DMCH authorlies, he added.

shortage of beds there is also

lack of manpower.

Dr Sen regretted that besides

As of yesterday 72 patients

"Since 1986 we have been strug-

gling to have a separate unit to

Shopping blissfully at the mela.

- Star Photo: Zahedul I Khan lore. Inside, a curious visitor is never too far from a zealous attendant. The managers are all keen on sparing no effort in satisfying an enquirer. The displays are neatly arranged. One does not have to strain to observe all the items that are on

The stalls are, mainly due to space constraints, less methodical. However, the general enthusiasm of the workers mean that no visitor is dissatisfied.

There is only one assistant

surgeon 'available' for the entire

unit. He has to attend virtually

operations are done as per

unit remain vacant for long.

Those who were specially

trained in plastic surgery and

management of burn patients

have been either transferred or

sent for special study courses,

greater care for burn patients

and to support the DMCH team

Realising the need for

Many posts of doctors in the

schedule, one doctor said.

provide special treatment facil- all the patients round the clock

he added.

The booths are agog with fre-netic customers. The sheer variety of retail items mean that there is something to satiate ev-

Restaurants line the western boundary of the fairground. They offer a variety of food and drinks and a place to sit. A welcome respite for those worn out by the fair experience. The restaurants' location at the opposite end from the main entrance mean that most visitors would be crave a little something by the time they get there. It seems good business strategy on the part of the restaurant owners.

This year there is a total of 373 stalls, pavilions and minipavilions. Out of these 84 belong to foreign owners. The companies that have subscribed to fairground spaces range from producers of electrical gadgets to kashmiri shawl makers. It is an eclectic mix. However, the aim is singular; to attract local customers.

" The fair is a good opportunity for us to advertise our products. We are relatively new in the market and people do not know us well. The fair will help us change that" Said the manager of one electrical appliance

A manager of City Vegetable Oil Mills Ltd. said.

"We are wholesale manufacturers. We have little scope to interact with our customers. The fair provides us with a wonderful opportunity to get in touch with those who are eventually buying our products."

The stall owners seem generally satisfied with the level of customer contact that the fair is affording them

The visitors are content as well. " I have come all the way from Dinajpur to visit the fair. I am impressed", said one. "This is wonderful. There are many things to buy and the price is very good." Added an-

Last year sales at the fair amounted to about Tk 3 billion Authorities predict that, by the time DITF '99 concludes on February 28, total business achieved will be greater than last years event. According to them the fair has been a success

Reject hartals, Hasina urges business bodies

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has asked business leaders to take a strong stand against hartal for uninterrupted growth of economy, re-

ports UNB. "You can play an important role in this regard. Continue businesses ... we will be with you," she told an 18-member delegation of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) yesterday.

The delegation, led by DCCI president M H Rahman, met with the Prime Minister at her office and pleaded for a consensus that political programmes will not hamper economic activities.

They pointed out that hartals are blocking economic growth.

The Prime Minister said her government has repeatedly tried to convince the opposition parties and sit with them for discussion to ensure political stability, the prerequisite for economic uplift.

Even the President took initiatives to have discussion with the opposition parties, she said.

ended here last night.

the two sides later.

said in Dhaka tonight.

The agreement will be valid

for two years with a provision

for renewal through mutual

consent. Formal agreement is

With the initialling of an

agreement, the much awaited

direct bus service between

Dhaka and Calcutta is likely to

start in the first half of next

month, a senior official of the

ministry of communications

expected between March 7 to 10.

Initially two buses will ply

from either side on six days,

keeping Sunday off. Under the

protocol Bangladesh will oper-

ate from Dhaka on Mondays,

Wednesdays and Fridays and

from Calcutta on Tuesday.

Thursday and Saturdays. India

will operate services from Cal-

cutta on Mondays, Wednesdays

and Fridays and from Dhaka

on Tuesdays, Thursdays and

joint secretary in the ministry

Karar Mahmudul Hassan,

Saturday.

The trial run of the buses is

expected to be signed between

"He was ready to talk about rescheduling of the Paurashava elections, but they (opposition) did not respond to the President's call.'

The President's speech in Parliament was delayed for two hours to facilitate the discussion with the opposition, which went in vein, she said.

Hasina said the people have no obligation that they will have to observe hartal if it is called any time, and questioned about justification of the opposition sponsored hartals.

'What's the issue, for what benefit of the people they are calling hartals one by one. We have established a system for changeover. So there is no justification of calling hartals on political issues."

She blamed the opposition for calling hartals to "protect the killers of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu."

Hasina said the development in trade and economy is not possible without political stability for which the present government has established ac-

countability in Parliament. "We will resign before our tenure ends and elections will be held under a caretaker government and the people will cast their votes freely," she said.

Referring to the opposition demand for resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner, the Prime Minister said CEC is a constitutional post and the government has nothing to do with it.

They are demanding resignation of CEC, but what is his fault is not clear. All on a sudden, they brought this issue in forefront, which has no justification," she said.

She said being ruling party. Awami League was defeated in different by-elections. "But we did not demand resignation of CEC. We believe in democracy, we know there is defeat and win in polls and verdict of the people is final.

"The two (Khaleda and Ershad) have been united only to protect the killers, to foil the execution of Bangabandhu murder case verdict," she said.

Referring to economic issues, she said the government is encouraging the private sector and offered highest possible incentive for the growth of trade and commerce.

Steps have been taken to reform the power sector, it has been opened for private investment and the government is also trying to ensure infrastructural facilities for industrial growth, she said.

Hasina urged the business leaders to set up agro-based industries and also small and medium export-led industries to increase country's export

Referring to a proposal of DCCI for setting up an industrial park by them, she asked for making it at a distant place from the capital preferably on the other side of Bangabandhu

Bridge. She also suggested setting up of 10-megawatt power plants in the private sector to overcome the power shortage and assured possible steps for easing traffic jams in the capital.

Big party power hunger Dhaka-Calcutta | bus run starts blamed for Aref murder next month NEW DELHI, Feb 18: By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh and India have ini-Speakers at a condolence tialled an agreement and a promeeting in the city yesterday tocol to launch the much held big parties' hunger for awaited bus service between power responsible for political Dhaka and Calcutta, reports murders in the country.

Karar Mahmudul Hasan. The meeting was organised joint secretary in the ministry at the foot of the Central Shaof communications of heed Minar to condole the Bangladesh, and K S Bhati, killings of five left leaders injoint secretary in the ministry cluding senior leader of Jatiya of surface transport of India. Samajtantrik Dal (JSD)and initialled the agreement and veteran freedom fighter Kazi the protocol on behalf of their Aref Ahmed in Kushtia on respective countries after two February 16. days of negotiations which

Speakers, representing different political parties and cultural activists, denounced activities of armed terrorists in south-western part of the country and demanded an end to political killings. They also demanded immediate arrest and trial of the killers of Kazi Aref

and others. JSD general secretary Hasanul Haq Inu said killers had been used as pawns by power-hungry political parties

for winning elections. "Killers

never stop as there has been no

punishment for all the political

killings they had committed in the past," he said. Workers' Party general secretary Rashed Khan Menon said killers were harboured by rulers. They are toll collectors, killers and act as mercenaries of the ruling class. I can name these killers one by one and can

tell you who belongs to which party.". Menon said. Nirmal Sen of Sramik Krishak Samajbadi Dal said, as elections near, big parties would now require to hire

armed goons.

Shahjahan Siraj, a leftistturned BNP leader, called for a consensus on putting an end to political killings in the coun-

With acting president of JSD Nure Alam Jiku in the chair, the condolence meeting was also addressed, among others. by leaders of various left-lean ing parties and Left Democratic Front (LDF) including Haidar Akbar Khan Rono, Monniddin Khan Badal, Pankaj Bhattacharya, Ajoy Ray, Abdullah Sarcar, Sharif Nurul Ambia, AFM Mahbubul Haq. Azizul Islam, Dilip Barua, and Shirin Akhter. Besides, representatives of

Sammilita Sangshkritik Jote. Col. Taher Council, and Homeo Professionals Council spoke at the condolence meeting.



Political leaders at Shaheed Minar

- Star photo

Cross examination resumes By Staff Correspondent

Shazneen murder trial

Cross-examination of Lati-

der case, yesterday continued cross-examining the informant.

February 22 for further crossexamination of the informant. Besides, he fixed the same day for hearing of the bail petitions moved on behalf of maids Parveen and Minu on February

Hasan, a key accused in the case, was produced before the court yesterday after his absence on the previous occasion. Deputy Jailer Shah Alam yesterday submitted a report before the court in reply to a show cause notice.

It may be recalled that during the proceedings of last Tuesday, the judge issued a show cause notice on the jail authorities on three counts: why Hasan was not produced before the court, why no custody warrant was submitted and why no report was submitted to the court in this regard.

15, youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23 last year.

Following is a brief account of the answers given by Latifur Rahman during the cross-examination by defence lawyer Mohammad Ali

FIR that Hasan along with the other accused killed Shazneen as part of a blue print. In the FIR, I mentioned that Shahid along with other accused were involved in the murder. In statements to the police, I and others have said that Shahid alone could not have committed

volved the accused in the incident as part of a conspiracy. In the FIR I mentioned that the statements of the accused were contradictory. For this reason,

from Europe have visited the country, another doctor pointed Recently, a six-member

of plastic surgeons, a number of

distinguished plastic surgeons

Italian plastic surgery team led by Prof D Paolo G Morselli, a specialist and also president of Inter-Plast, came on a voluntary mission to treat patients on priority basis. Éminent British plastic surgeon Dr Ronald William Hiles is currently performing surgeries to help develop skill of the local surgeons.

fur Rahman, father of murdered teenager Shazneen, resumed in the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court yesterday.

Mohammad Ali, defence lawyer for supervisor Badal, an accused in the Shazneen mur-

The judge, A K Roy fixed

Meanwhile, contractor

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman,

I did not mention in the

the crime. - It is not true that I in-

I have mentioned that the ac-

of communications, who led cused were involved in the Bangladesh delegation to New — It is not true that the accused were brought to my residence and they were tortured by my family members in the presence of police while they were on police remand.

- I heard that accused Humayun died of a cardiac arrest. I was abroad at that time. It is not true that Humayun was tortured to death by me and po-

- It is not true that I did not suspect any other person, except Shahid, of involvement in the

 It is not true that I have used any influence for taking Shahid and other accused on police remand and torturing

- It is not true that except Shahid, others were not involved in the killing. - It is not true that I have filed the case on the advice of

- After completing his work, Badal used to return home between 10 and 11 pm every day. I do not know if he ever stayed the night at my house with other workers.

- It is possible that Badal is involved in the killing with others. It is not true that Badal was made an accused in the case after he refused to be a false witness.

- I do not know witness Asad personally. Asad works at my daughter's residence. - Earlier, witness Nurjahan worked at my daughter's residence. Now she is working at

my residence. - Nurjahan came to work at my residence. But Parveen and Minu threatened her and forced her to leave. I came to know it from other servants after about one month of the incident. - Nurjahan came back to my

residence about one and a half

months after the incident. - I do not know whether she herself came or she was brought. It is not true that I brought her to my residence for giving false statement and made her a witness. - Witness Muslim Hawladar

is the oldest staff at my resi-

dence. He has been working

since the Pakistan period.

Delhi and signed agreement with his Indian counterpart to initiate the bus service, told BSS to night "we are ready for the service, but the other side need some time". He said, "the understanding we received is that service can start by March

Under the agreement and protocol signed in New Delhi last night two buses from each side will ply for the initial period for six days of the week, He said of the 358 km road

journey from Dhaka to Calcutta, 276 km distance fall in Bangladesh. He said because of narrow and congested road, the 82 km distance on the Indian side will take about 3 hours. The Indian side said they would put necessary efforts to improve their portion of the road which is expected to take about one year. Hassan added.

Bangladesh proposed that the return ticket be taka equivalent to maximum twenty US dollars, while the Indian side proposed thirty dollars. The matter was not settled, a delegation source said and added that it will be decided subsequently through mutual consultation.

minister Jaswant Singh today expressed satisfaction at the signing of an agreement between his country and Bangladesh to launch bus service between Calcutta and Dhaka, BSS adds reports from

Indian external affairs

"Like Pakistan we have signed an agreement with Bangladesh" yesterday for the bus service between the two countries, he said at a press conference while briefing on prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's visit to Lahore by bus on February 20. He said India wanted to

move to sign subsequent agree-

ments and make the Calcutta-Dhaka bus service operational. Replying to a question on the Trinamul Congress leader Mamata Banarjee's demand that Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee should inaugurate the Calcutta-Dhaka bus service, the external affairs minister said "we will work it out."

Poetry festival begins in Dhaka

By DU Correspondent

The National Poetry Festival began on the Dhaka University campus yesterday with a call to remove all kinds of darkness and suffering from the society.

Poet Shamsur Rahman inaugurated the two-day festival at the Hakim Chhatar near the University Central Library The theme of this year's festival, organised by the Jatiya Kabita Parisad, is "Poetry Eliminate Darkness". Shamsur Rahman in his in-

augural speech said we would not be successful to remove the darkness from the society if evil-powers like religious extremists are still in the country. He described the religious radicals and communal forces

as a big threat to the country

and urged progressive forces to

be united in resisting them.
A good number of poets from across the country and six guest poets from India and Nepal joined the festival on the first

Immediately after the inaugural session, a procession was brought out which marched toward the Central Shaheed Minar where poets placed floral wreaths to pay homage to the martyrs of the Language Movement in 1952. They also placed wreaths at the mazars of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam and artist Quamrul Hasan.

Two sessions for poetry recitation were held in the afternoon. Fayez Ahmed chaired the first session while Syed Shamsul Haq headed the second. Another session for resident poets who write in foreign languages was held with Syed Hasan Imam in the chair. Two seminars on National

Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam and Jibananda Das will be held in the morning today. A session for the foreign poets will be held in the evening.

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Jubaida Nasrin Assistant General Manager for and on behalf of the South Asian Development Fund. Phone: 9555778, Fax No: 9563313.

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packed yet there does not seem to exist any undue inconvenience. People enter and leave the fair in an orderly fashion. Everyone is spared of the harrowing entrance experience that seem to take the shine of almost every outdoor event

Once inside the compound, the expanse of the ground is awesome. The appearance of the fair from outside is deceiv-It resembles a bottle whose body you cannot see. Once you enter the bottle the relative largeness of the inside is surprising. The fair is also grander than the mind conjures it to be. One feels like a child

arena with pavilions spotting

No room for acid victims at DMCH

By Naimul Haq Imagine a country of 120 million people having no hospital facilities to treat acid burn victims and most of the other burn victims refused admission in the only hospital treating

such cases. Several thousand acid burn victims report to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital a year but even after 27 years of independence it does not have any

Consequently, they suffer some sort of permanent disability. The 16-bed burn and plastic surgery unit at DMCH is not

manitarian grounds.

tant at DMCH burn and plastic

surgery unit.

ities but no one seems to realise while four surgeons make sure the need for a separate unit." Dr Aminul Islam, assistant registrar at DMCH, said many patients who require immediate medical care have to wait till October 2001 to get admission. "We can admit only three cases per week. The names of

There is no other hospital in the country to treat such cases. fused admission. "While makequipped to treat acid burns, yet ing selection at the out patient department (OPD), we are under

timates, about one per cent of the population suffers various burn injuries a year in the country. Those who suffer acid burn need a very special care. The

those who don't get admission unit for treatment of acid burn. are listed in a register. As soon as a bed is vacated, the next person on the list is admitted." In such a situation, many patients who come to seek treatment at the hospital are re-

travel

Sen said.

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it admits such patients on huimmense pressure. There are so According to unofficial esmany serious cases. Almost all the patients ,most of whom.

treatment procedure is also different. Burn from flames can be treated with less complications but those who suffer injuries from acid suffer a great deal of complications," said Dr S L Sen, a plastic surgery consul-