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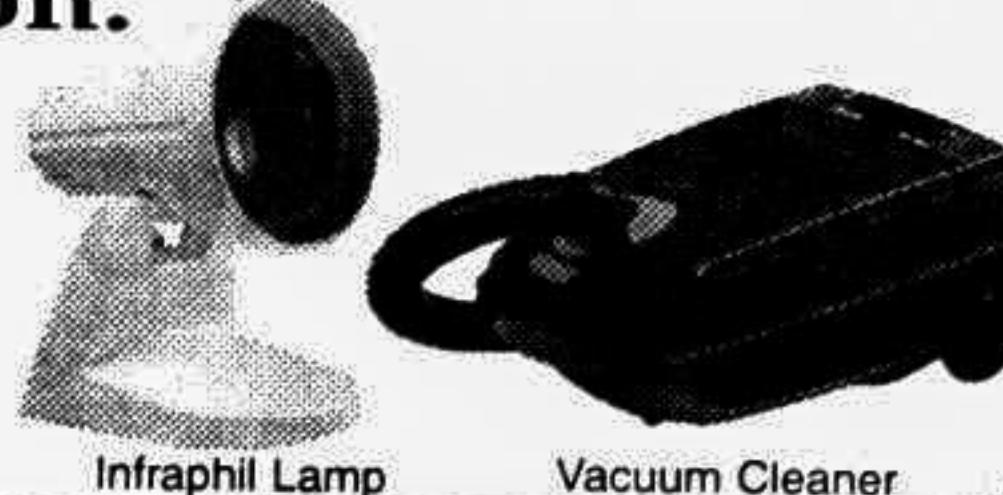
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Voices of protest

Theatre artistes march to condemn Jessore bombing.

—Star Photo: Amran Hossain

## Urea traders turning the screw on farmers

By Reaz Ahmed

As farmers strive for a bumper production of boro paddy to recoup the loss of Aman due to the devastating floods last season, a section of fertiliser traders has resorted to manipulation of fertiliser price taking advantage of the situation.

Reports from the rice-rich northern districts say that in many areas farmers have to pay much higher prices for urea as they badly need the chemical fertiliser for 'top dressing' prior to the Boro harvest.

Growers expect a substantial increase in boro production this season due to rise in acreage and favourable weather and soil condition after the floods. But unscrupulous traders are charging price of Tk 370 for a 50-kg bag of urea fertiliser instead of the normal price of Tk 270 to 280.

According to official

sources, the demand for urea has increased so much that dealers sold 3,55,000 tonnes of urea in February this year compared to 2,95,000 tonnes in February last year.

Finding the trade lucrative again, several hundred fertiliser dealers who had withdrawn their deposits with the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) one year back, returned to the old business over the last two months, sources said.

As a result, the number of fertiliser dealers in the country has now risen to 3,000 from 2,650.

The Industries Minister, in a recent announcement, slashed down the dealers' deposit to Tk 1 lakh from Tk two lakh.

The Food and Agriculture Minister, however, blamed the Opposition for temporary rise in fertiliser price saying that

their repeated hartial calls caused disruption in transportation of fertiliser. "When we were in the opposition and used to call hartial, we exempted fertiliser carrying trucks and oil tankers. But, they (opposition) aren't sparing anything."

The minister claimed that prices have settled down again at a reasonable level.

Bangladesh Fertiliser Association (BFA), which represent the dealers did not admit that fertiliser price has gone up. Its leaders argued that due to heavy demand for trucks for carrying foodgrains in bulk, truckers raised the carrying charge for grenade by at least 20 per cent.

BFA executive secretary Abdul Baten, however, said that hartial created a panic and fertiliser prices behaved erratic for few days.

Khaleda accuses govt of Jessore bomb blasts

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday accused the government of Jessore bomb explosion on Sunday that left eight people dead and more than 150 injured, reports UNB.

"Opposition or fundamentalist forces do not possess grenade. It is with the government and they have committed this act," Khaleda said. "The army experts have ascertained that the explosion was caused by grenade."

The Leader of the Opposition in Parliament was speaking at a reception accorded to JCD president Habibun Nabi Sohel and general secretary Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu on their release from jail, in front of her official residence in the evening.

"Jessore killing was a pre-planned action. After carrying out the plan, the government is putting the blame on the opposition and Islamic forces in a bid to divert public attention," she said.

The former prime minister said the ruling party is carrying out such incidents in planned way to barter away the country's sovereignty to India and thus cling to power.

**Drug dealers attack police, kill one woman**

By Staff Correspondent

A young woman was killed and at least fifty others, including eight police personnel, were injured when a group of drug traders attacked police following the arrest of two drug traders on Wednesday near a slum at city's Kamalapur area yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Nurani Begum, 20.

A rickshawpuller, Rafiq, received bullet injuries on the chest. Two sub-inspectors, Kanchan and Najim, also received injuries during a battle that lasted for more than two hours at the Titipara slum under Sabugdhara thana in the city.

Rafiq was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) in critical condition.

According to locals and hospital sources, the incident took place after drug traffickers and slum dwellers started a procession to protest the arrest of two people on Wednesday evening.

When the police arrived at the scene, the gang started throwing crackers at them.

In response, the police lobbed a number of tear gas shells to disperse the attackers. The attackers then hurled a large number of crackers on the spot, which resulted in injuries to at least fifty people, sources added.

Qualified bidders will then be invited to attend a conference in Dhaka to discuss and finalise the scope of the system.

The conference will further decide whether the system can be established within the existing framework socio-economic, technical and environmental policies of the government.

The successful bidders will sign a contract with the government. The company will be allowed to charge the facility users fare, tolls, fees, rentals and other charges that would enable it to recover the costs of implementing and operating the project.

The companies that intend to participate in the bidding process were also asked to submit proposals elaborating their technical expertise, investment mode and prospective plans to establish and operate the elevated rail system.

## Four die in bus-truck collision

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Mar 11: At least four people were killed and 40 others injured in a road accident on Dhaka-Sylhet highway near Ayet Ali Textile Mills at Khadun under Rupganj police station here this morning.

According to police, the accident took place when a passenger bus carrying mostly students of Murapara Degree College from Narsingdi fell into a road side ditch after a head-on collision with a Dhaka-bound truck at about 9:45 am.

Three students — Shahadat Hossain, 21, Kabir Hossain, 22, and Lemon, 25 — died on the spot. They were coming to their college to cast vote in the student union election. The another victim, bus driver Noor Hossain, succumbed to his injuries on the way to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

The seriously injured 25 people were admitted to DMCH. Of them, the condition of Kabir, 60, Bimal, 30, Mamun Miah, 40, Suraiyah Akhtar, 40, Mahmood



The wreckage of the minibus hammered by a truck.

—Star Photo: Sheikh Enamul Haque

Ali, 18, Zahangir, 32, Khoka, 22, Quamrul, 25 and Noor-e-Alam, 25, were stated to be critical.

The truck loaded with bricks, however, managed to es-

cape following the accident.

A case was filed with Rupganj police station. None was arrested in this connection till filing of this report at 9:00 pm today.

## Elevated trains to ease Dhaka traffic chaos

By Rafiq Hasan

An elevated, mass rail-transit system will be established in the capital in order to ease traffic congestion, enhance traffic safety and meet the future transport needs of the city.

According to sources, the system, the first of its kind, will be set up by private enterprise.

The ministry of communications has invited proposals for establishing the network in Dhaka metropolitan area from well-known local and international firms.

"Proposals have already been invited from the reputed firms to set up the mass rail transit system in the capital on the basis of Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) or Build, Operate and Own (BOO)," said a senior official of the ministry.

Response to the first phase of proposals will be received

within the 31 May and inaugurated the same day in presence of the bidders or their representatives.

The main objective of the elevated mass transit system will be to augment the existing traffic capacity of the city and it would not obstruct or reduce the capacity of the surface roads over which the rails will be built, the official said.

If necessary, the government will undertake acquisition of additional land, removal of existing structures and relocation of utility services," the proposal said.

The elevated vehicles, in order to be more environment friendly, will be required to use electrical energy instead of combustion energy from fossil fuel.

In its invitation letter, the ministry also informed the

firms that the bidding would follow a two-stage process.

In the first stage of bidding, the government would consider the technical, investment and business proposals of the companies.

Technical and financial capabilities of the bidding firms will be adjudged and they would subsequently qualify them for the second stage of bidding.

Qualified bidders will then be invited to attend a conference in Dhaka to discuss and finalise the scope of the system.

The conference will further decide whether the system can be established within the existing framework socio-economic, technical and environmental policies of the government.

The successful bidders will sign a contract with the government. The company will be allowed to charge the facility users fare, tolls, fees, rentals and other charges that would enable it to recover the costs of implementing and operating the project.

The companies that intend to participate in the bidding process were also asked to submit proposals elaborating their technical expertise, investment mode and prospective plans to establish and operate the elevated rail system.

CHITTAGONG, Mar 11: A report on the city's deteriorating law and order was sent to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today.

The report, containing a list of 396 terrorists of pro-Awami League Chhatra League, BNP's student front JCD, Jamaat-backed Chhatra Shibir and NPP, was faxed to the Prime Minister, said a senior police official.

Meanwhile, police arrested 2,702 people on various charges from the city from January 1 to March 7.

SYLHET, Mar 11: The government will issue two big bonds in taka and dollar this month for funding country's industrial development, reports UNB.

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