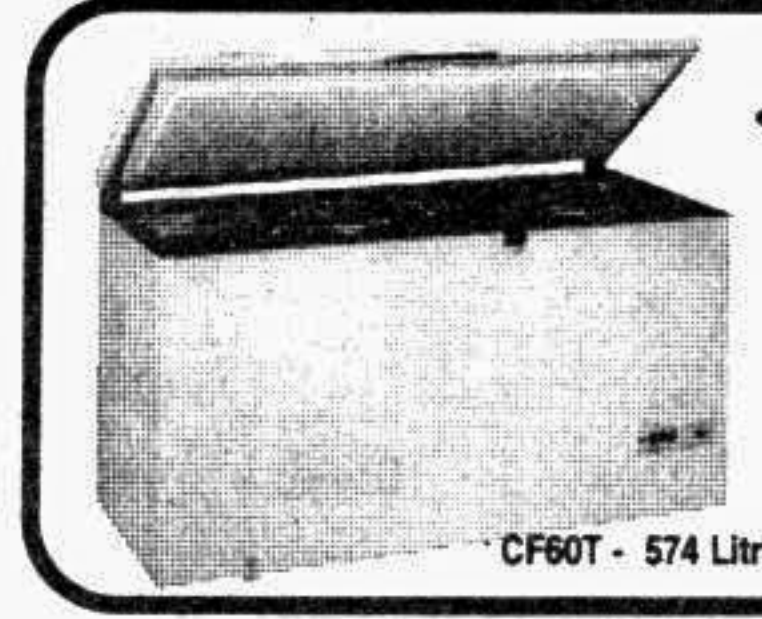




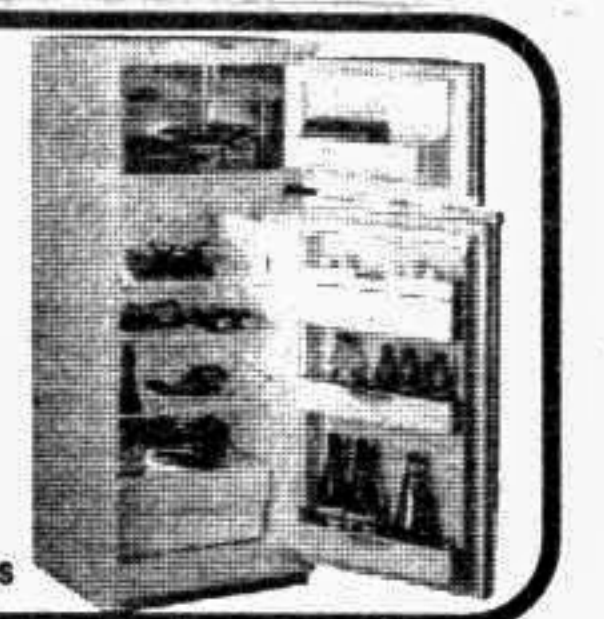
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Down to Earth

Harrowing Experience for City Commuters

By A S M Nurunnabi

The city commuters always run the gauntlet in their daily pursuits of various business when, in the midst of perennial ghastly traffic jams, they are required to move from one place to another. There is hardly any let-up in the course of this bitter experience during any part of the day.

This daily grind in a commuter's life relates to three specific city locations, among others, namely city's Court Buildings Complex, the Salimullah Medical College Hospital, and the Sadarghat Launchgah terminal.

The Dhaka Court Buildings Complex is situated in a densely populated area of old Dhaka. Getting access to this place by all concerned people like judges, magistrates, practicing lawyers, litigant people and others is a nightmarish experience. The Court Buildings Complex has several components, such as, District and other tiers of judiciary, the Metropolitan Magistrates Courts, the Treasury, a police administration unit and other auxiliary facilities. Take any of the roads to reach this place and you will have a tortured experience. One such road is Nawabpur Road which always remains jammed with rickshaws, baby-taxis, push carts, etc.

Both sides of the road are lined with a great number of shops dealing in all kinds of goods. The traffic jams, both pedestrian and vehicular, are a constant phenomenon. The other important route is the North-South road. The road, running south-east from Gulistan area, has also shops lined on both sides. The characteristic feature of this stretch of road is that the shops here mainly deal in R.S. roads, sanitary wares, pipes and fittings and other building requisites. Long lines of trucks are parked outside the numerous shops, loading and unloading goods, C.I. sheets and

other building supplies. This is a whole-time spectacle. The traffic jams thus created leave the passengers of rickshaws, baby-taxis and buses waiting in their tracks for an indefinite time.

In this awesome situation, one wonders how the various classes of people who are obliged to go to the court buildings, viz. the judges, magistrates, government officials, the litigant persons and others involved, could suffer the tribulations of daily passage through this area.

There have been for long suggestions for shifting the court buildings to a more suitable place outside the sphere of overwhelming city congestion, but no positive results have yet emerged. It, therefore, seems that the concerned professional people and others are doomed to undergo the daily experience of suffering for an indefinite period.

The other place similarly difficult for easy access is the Salimullah Medical College Hospital. Being situated in the old part of the city, surrounded by a maze of lanes and by-lanes connected to the main road which also suffers from heavy traffic jams, the patients who require their services, particularly in emergencies, are vulnerable to anxiety and tension. The reasons are obvious. It is no easy job to negotiate the heavy crowds of passersby and the long lines of rickshaws jamming the outlets to the hospital. Even a hospital ambulance carrying a patient in emergency faces the same critical situation. The problem of congestion has been compounded by the existence of a large-scale medicine market opposite the hospital premises. Since this is mainly a wholesale medicine market, traders in medicine come from within and outside the city, through the area. The problem of getting easy access to the hospital in times of need tends to discourage many pa-

tients to seek its services and divert them to other hospitals in the city. This being the only big hospital in the old part of the city, its importance can hardly be over emphasised. To solve the problem of heavy congestion around the hospital premise, it seems that the only remedy lies in the construction of a sort of fly-over connecting the hospital zone from a suitable point in a jam-free area. This is, of course, an ambitious idea, requiring a substantial outlay of funds but in view of the overwhelming importance of the hospital in a densely populated area, such fly-over may be a feasible proposition, if we keep in view that such fly-overs are quite helpful in Bangkok, which previously suffered from chronic traffic jams.

The third problem of heavy congestion bedevilling the life of passengers intending to undertake launch journeys, is the location of the Sadarghat Launch Terminal. In this case also, the awesome chaos resulting from the over crowding by hawkers, pavement sellers of various commodities, and hordes of rickshaws makes it a virtual bedlam. In this situation, if any person wants to avail a steamer journey at a particular time, he needs to keep sufficient time in hand to pass through the heavy crowd in the vicinity of the launchgah. Since the launchgah has to stay where it is and it is not easy to overcome the prevailing environment of heavy congestion, it seems that the intending launch passengers have to live the existing state of things as best as they can.

The bottom line is that as long no positive steps are taken to ease off the traffic pressure caused by the rising city population, there is no escape from the continuing distress that city commuters suffer when their destinations lie in the locations specified above.



Appalling road digging coupled with waterlogging has made the narrow street at the city's north Goran a nightmarish proposition. — Star photo



Anniversary of Jahanara Imam's death today

The fifth anniversary of death of Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam will be observed in the country today, reports UNB.

On this day in 1994, Begum Imam, who had launched a massive movement against the 1971 war criminals by forming Jatiya Samanwoy Committee and Ekatturer Ghatok Dal Nirmul Committee, died in the USA after suffering from cancer for a long time.

Jatiya Samanwoy Committee and Ekatturer Ghatok Dal Nirmul Committee have chalked out elaborate programmes to observe the death anniversary of Jahanara Imam, the mother of Rumi, a martyr of the War of Liberation.

Other socio-cultural organisations and student bodies as well as different political parties have also taken up programmes to observe the day.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued separate messages on the eve of the death anniversary and recalled her glorious role in uniting people imbued with the spirit of the Liberation War.

On the occasion, Projomo 71, an organisation of children of the Liberation War martyrs, organised a discussion on "Communalism in Bangladesh: Our Destination" here yesterday.

Speakers at the meeting held at Muktiuddh Jadughar recalled the role of Shaheed Janani in uniting the new generation in the crusade against the war criminals.

It was addressed by poet Shamsur Rahman, Syed Hasan Imam, Barrister Amirul Islam, Prof Borhanuddin Khan Jahangir, BFUJ President Abul Kalam Azad, advocate Sultana Kamal, Prof Abdul Mannan Chowdhury, Dr Nimchandra Bhomik, Shamin Akhter and Meghna Guha Thakurta.

The Projomo 71 and Barrister Shafiq Ahmed have been awarded with this year's Jahanara Imam Award introduced by Ekatturer Ghatok Dal Nirmul Committee.

All set for bus run by June 30

The Ministry of Communications has said that commercial operation of Dhaka-Calcutta direct bus service would get off at the end of this month, reports UNB.

"We're optimistic about beginning the operations on June 29. If not possible, it's must be the day after (June 30)," said a senior official of the ministry.

He told UNB that all formalities to begin the commercial operations had been completed from Bangladesh side. It may take another day for New Delhi to finish with the task.

The official said they kept regular contacts with Delhi which is also interested in launching the commercial bus operation between Dhaka and Calcutta via Benapole by this month.

"Only minutes before I had talks with Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi that informed that the approval by the Indian government was now only a fax message away from us," he said.

The approval by the respective governments is mainly needed for conducting customs protocols at the starting and ending points instead of border checkpoints.

It is also essential for completing immigration formalities inside the buses at the checkpoints at Benapole on the Bangladesh side and Petrapole in India.

Bangladesh government has already approved the customs and immigration protocols for

Opposition

From Page 1

withdraws new taxes," said a member of the liaison committee after its meeting yesterday.

The liaison committee which met yesterday at Jamaat-e-Islami central office in the city held discussion on future course of action including further expediting the current anti-government movement, strengthening of simultaneous movement of the four parties.

Presided over by Jamaat secretary general Matir Rahman Nizami, it was attended by BNP leader Anwar Zahid, Jatiya Party leader Kazi Zafar Ahmed, Jamaat leaders Mohammad Kamaruzzaman, Abdul Kader Mollah and ATM Azharul Islam, Islamic Oikya Jote leaders Fazlul Haq Aminul, ARM Abdul Matin and Pirzada Moshleuddin Abu Bakar.

Meeting sources said the liaison committee almost agreed on enforcing a countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal in the first week of July if new taxes to the tune of about Tk 1000 crore were not withdrawn.

They said there would be continuation of next programmes and the anti-government programmes is expected to get momentum after the rainy season.

Sources said the liaison committee representatives were unanimous to maintain their unity at any cost and asked all concerned in the alliance to remove all misunderstanding for the sake of the movement.

UNB quoting a source said the liaison committee may call hartal on July 8 if the budget is passed "without changes or with some changes for eyewash."

Meanwhile, a meeting of the 7-party alliance was held yesterday morning at 29 Minto Road official residence of the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia.

The meeting demanded repolling in the Registered Graduate election of Dhaka University Senate because the election was rigged.

Khaleda says Take positive steps to keep CSM open

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia has asked the authorities concerned not to close down the Chittagong Steel Mills and take effective steps to offset losses.

Talking with the leaders of joint action committee of Chittagong Steel Mills met here last night, the BNP chief said the move to close the mills will discourage industrialisation in the country. Chittagong Steel Mills is one of the heavy industries in the country and it contributed a lot at the initial stage to industrialisation in Bangladesh.

Her government had taken some positive measures and kept the mills in operation, she said.

However, she said, the present government has decided to close down the mills which might leave the skilled and experienced technicians, workers and employees unemployed.

The former prime minister asked the government to reconsider the decision considering the interests of industrialisation and fate of the workers and employees.

Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal president Abdullah Al Noman and general secretary Nazrul Islam Khan, leaders of joint action committee Nur Mohammad, Abdul Jabbar Khan were present.

Akhteruzzaman's reply today

By Staff Correspondent

BNP lawmaker Akhteruzzaman is likely to reply to the show cause notice today, served on him by the party for his press statement on the Opposition-called June 13 hartal to protest the proposed national budget for the 1999-2000.

The notice served by BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan on June 19 asked Akhter to reply in writing within a week.

"I have to reply by tomorrow (Saturday) because the show cause notice asked me to reply within seven days. I have all most prepared my reply and hopefully I will submit it tomorrow," Akhter said when contacted over telephone yesterday.

In his press statement, he had opposed the June 13 hartal called by the BNP-led four-party alliance and urged the people not to respond to it.

Khaleda

From Page 1

the opposition to cover up their failures.

Accusing the Awami League of using unparliamentary word in Parliament she said: "If Awami League can do that, my party has every right to reply."

On the question of her absence from the House, she said: "There is no atmosphere in Parliament. Can I reply the Awami Leaguers in that language? I was not born in such a family."

She called upon the journalists to maintain neutrality in performing their professional duties and accused the government of threatening the newspapers and the journalists.

Production of quality seeds stressed

By Staff Correspondent

Speakers at a function in the city yesterday stressed the need for producing quality seeds in the country with private sector initiative, instead of creating a seed market here for multinational companies.

Local seed traders present at the function admitted that they were more interested in seed trading than going for seed production.

They were speaking at a reception to Dr Zahurul Karim, Executive Chairman of Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council, on his becoming a Fellow of the Third World Academy of Sciences. Seedmen's Society of Bangladesh (SSB) hosted the reception held at LGED Bhaban.

Dr Karim is the third Bangladesh to become a Fellow of the Academy founded by 41 Nobel laureates and world renowned scientists in 1993.

Dr Kazi M Badruddozza, former agriculture minister MA Munim, Dr Zahurul Karim and seed traders Sayed Sadeque and Gias Uddin Ahmed addressed the function chaired by SSB President BI Siddique.

BCS posts

From Page 1

In Police Service, fifteen posts went to students having DU degrees while only three went to those having RU degrees. Students of JU, CU and BAU got two posts each in this cadre.

Out of 143 posts in the Health Service, students of DU got the highest number of 86 posts. Students of CU and RU got 38 and 18 respectively.

In the Judiciary, out of 73 posts, 52 went to DU students the rest went to students of RU, the PSC report said.

Out of 271 posts in the Education cadre, DU students got the highest number of 147, followed by those of CU with 47 and JU with 37.

Students of DU got all the 14 posts in the Audit and Accounts cadre. The only post of Railway Communication and Commerce also went a DU student.

Flood situation

From Page 1

Water level in the lake was recorded 92 Means Sea Level (MSL) at 4 pm today as against 81.50 MSL, Mondal said.

"Despite discharge of water through the spillway and for electricity generation, the per hour rise of water level in the lake is being recorded 0.50 MSL," he said.

If this continues, more water would be needed to be discharged to protect the dam, he added.

Seafood fair opens

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mentioned the plans for setting up World Trade Centre in Dhaka to add a new dimension to the export sector.

"We have also agreed in principle to set up product-wise industrial parks at different places across the country," she told opening function of the exhibition on the export product.

She said the commodity marketing system had been strengthened to expand export market alongside increasing production.

Hasina told the function that the government was maintaining continuous effort to implement the SAPTA agreement to increase exports to SAARC countries.

Initiative has also been taken to export goods to neighbouring countries free of tariffs.

Regarding the steps taken for the frozen food sector, the prime minister said her government had taken a number of pragmatic steps for the development of pisciculture. Fisheries Quality Control Rules for development of infrastructure, increased production, preservation and quality control of fish resources have been formulated and implemented.

Special measures have been taken for development of quality of fishery products to boost exports. The existing industries are being given financial support in this regard.

Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria said at the function if necessary, he would ensure more credit facilities for the sector, but no subsidy.

He, however, put emphasis on productivity and value addition to make the sector competitive with other exporting nations.

Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed said the export trade could not cross the target only due to floods for three months when the exporters did not receive a single order from abroad.

"However, I can declare here that at the end of the fiscal, total exports will be near the target."

Fisheries and Livestock Minister ASM Rab said although export from the frozen foods sector was on the decline, there was scope to increase it exploiting the opportunities unfolding through globalisation.

The frozen foods sector, having a total of 300 fish processing plants that produce two lakh metric tonnes of fishes annually, is the second-highest export earners after garment industry.

This fiscal, earnings from this sector are expected to amount to 300 million US dollars. Officials said in nine months of the 1998-99 fiscal to April, the export incomes stood at 214 million dollars.

FBCCI president Abdul Awal Mintoo advocated that there was genuine case for giving

some financial relief to the frozen foods sector either in terms of cash incentives or devaluation or exemption of interest liabilities with restructuring of debts.

Others who spoke on the occasion were Secretary in Charge of the Commerce Ministry Fazlul Haq, President of the Bangladesh Frozen Food Exporters Association (BBFEA) Kazi Shanewaz and Export Promotion Bureau Vice-Chairman AB Chowdhury.

Later the Prime Minister visited the stalls of the export-promotion fair.

About 36 stalls including three by foreign buyers and three by the shipping and services firms — are participating in the two-day export show.

Int'l day against drug abuse today

The International day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking will be observed today in the country as elsewhere across the world under the auspices of the United Nations, reports BSS.

On the occasion the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages on the occasion.

The Department of Narcotics Control has taken up elaborate programmes to observe the day. The department will brought out an anti-drug procession from Shishu Park. Home Minister Mohammad Nasim will lead the procession.

Besides, different anti-drug and social organisations will also observe the day through discussion, rally and procession.

The manufacturer in the Netherlands was contacted by fax asking for names of the chemicals used in making the plastic sheets. The Dutch manufacturer - Solvay Draka - declined to give those but confirmed its trade with Bangladesh.

Since there has been no research on DEHP or survey on the number of people exposed to the toxic chemicals in the country, details are not available.

Research in the US, however, showed that DEHP can cause cancer in human body.

Research details made available to this newspaper show that polyvinyl chloride

plastic (or PVC) is a hard plastic that requires chemicals called phthalates, one of which is DEHP, for pliability. "Since DEHP is not chemically bound to vinyl, it leaches out of the plastic and into body fluids or IV solutions where it is infused directly into patients."

When asked how risky is vinyl, Dr Michael McCally, Professor of Community and Preventive Medicine at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, New York, said, "Studies on DEHP warn about its toxic effects which include damage to the heart, liver, kidneys, lungs, and testes of laboratory animals. Various toxic effects of DEHP exposure have also been observed in studies of primates, premature infants and adult dialysis patients."

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) labels

APSU threatens

From Page 1

Some sources however told this correspondent that the BUET authorities have decided to reopen the residential halls for students on July 4.

The BUET authorities on Thursday expelled one student for life and three others for four terms with two terms of suspended expulsion for their involvement in vandalism and terrorist activities on the campus on April 25 and 26. The authorities also ordered suspended expulsion of 22 students for varying periods for involvement in the incidents.

The action was taken following a probe body report on the incidents. The probe body comprising some BUET teachers submitted its report to the authorities on May 30.

The APSU has been demanding a judicial probe into the incidents.

The APSU leaders at a press conference at the BUET cafeteria earlier on Thursday had termed the probe body report "partial and motivated" and said that it reflected the demands of BUET Teachers Association (BUETTA).

When contacted, a leader of the Engineering University Central Students Union (EUCSU) told this correspondent that EUCSU would launch a movement protesting the authorities' decision.

Meanwhile, the BUET authorities refused to disclose the names of the expelled students. The Daily Star yesterday contacted the Vice-Chancellor of BUET, some members of the probe body and some teachers but none of them disclosed the names.

Some student ransacked different academic buildings on the night of April 25 and attacked some teachers' quarters on the campus on the following night in a row over expulsion of a student for impersonating an examinee. BUET was closed since die on April 27 following the incidents.

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Professor Peter Orris, Director of Research at Great Lakes Centre for Occupational and Environmental Safety and Health, University of Illinois School of Public Health, told The Daily Star, "Besides the environmental hazard caused by the disposal of PVC plastic, the US Environmental Protection Agency considers DEHP, a leachate from PVC IV bags, a probable human carcinogen and we know that it is an endocrine disrupting chemical as well."

He said, "Therefore, as alternatives do exist, it would be wise to switch away from PVC to a less toxic plastic in saline and blood bags."

Intravenous saline & blood bags

From Page 1

tions for use. Officials there confirmed that the special plastic sheets (used in making the bags) are imported from the Netherlands.

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Research in the US, however, showed that DEHP can cause cancer in human body.

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DEHP as a probable human carcinogen.

"There are alternatives to vinyl medical products that are available now. Some 20 per cent of the IV bag market in the west has switched over to FDA-approved polyolefin IV bags that do not contain DEHP or create dioxin when incinerated" a report said.

The hazards of DEHP were recognised as early in 1986 when the Consumer Product Safety Commission asked the toy industries to remove DEHP from children's toys due to concerns about its toxicity and its ability to leach through saliva into children's digestive tract.

"The dangers posed by vinyl medical products do not end with their use in patient treatment. Disposing of vinyl by incinerating it creates large amounts of dioxin, one of the

most toxic substances known to science and a known human carcinogen, due to the high chlorine content of vinyl," the report added.

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৩০শে জুন সমাগত

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