



VOL. IX NO. 157 REGD. NO. DA 781

INTERNET: http://www.dailystarnews.com

ASHAR 19, 1406 BS

DHAKA SATURDAY JULY 3, 1999

RABIULAWAL 18, 1420 HIJRI

16 PAGES : PRICE TAKA 6.00

The Daily Star

LEASE FINANCING
Are You Looking For Financial Assistance In

- Capital Machinery
- Heavy Construction Equipment
- Medical Equipment
- Marine Transport
- Generator & Boiler
- Vehicle like Luxury Buses, Microbuses, Trucks, Tractors
- Cargo Carriers, Pick-Up, Cars
- Lifts/Elevators
- Air Conditioning Plants

PHOENIX LEASING COMPANY LTD.
Shadhinata Bhavan (1st fl.) 88, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka
Phone: 9569007 (Auto Hunting) Fax: 9567787
Agra Branch: R.M. House, 31 Agra Road C/A, Ctg. Ph: 710085, Fax: 710086

BNP to finalise route, date for proposed road march today

By Staff Correspondent
BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan will hold an emergency meeting with party leaders and MPs of greater Dhaka districts at the party central office at 5 pm today to discuss preparations for the proposed road march from Dhaka to Haluaghat.

A close aide of BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia told this correspondent that July 20-21 has been tentatively fixed for the road march, to be led by Begum Zia.

The meeting is expected to finalise the route and other details for the march, party sources said. Presidents and general secretaries or convenors and joint convenors, and local MPs of the party have been asked to attend today's meeting, said a party press release last night.

Meanwhile the liaison committee of the four-party opposition alliance is scheduled to meet this afternoon in the city. The meeting is expected to finalise the date for the proposed simultaneous road marches of BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikya Jote.

A joint meeting of leaders of Dhaka city BNP, its front organisations and DCC ward commissioners from the party will be held at 4:30 pm today at the central office of Jatiyatabadi Muktoddaha Dal, City BNP Convenor Sadek Hossain Khoka MP will preside over the meeting, the press release said.

AL plotting vote rigging, alleges Khaleda

Opposition leader Khaleda Zia has accused the ruling Awami League of plotting a massive vote rigging in next general election to capture power for another five years, reports UNB.

"Sensing a sure defeat in next election, the government AL has made blueprint to capture polling centres, cast false votes and change the polls result sheets... Awami League is expert in doing these misdeeds," she told a gathering of her party members in the city on Thursday.

The BNP chairperson and leader of the opposition in parliament alleged that voter's ID card was being forged, and fake voters were being included in the voters' list in collaboration with the Election Commission to implement the blueprint.

See Page 12 Col 5

BCL leader murdered in Khulna

KHULNA, July 2: A local leader of the ruling party's student wing Chhatra League was killed by miscreants in the city early today, reports UNB.

The victim was identified as Shaheen alias Chhoton, 22, son of Abdul Majid of Basupara area.

Police said miscreants waylaid Chhoton near Basupara crossing at midnight last night and hit him with sharp weapons. They left him in an unconscious state.

Local people rushed him to

See Page 12 Col 5

Inside Today

Article

Debt Relief for Poor Nations

Column: Connecting the Dots
by Dr AR Chowdhury
Page 4

Star Literature

Essay: American comic books: Forty years of fun; one Musings: The greater common good
Pages 6 & 7

Business

US may ease limits on computer exports to India, China, Russia
Page 8

Prayer Timings

July 3		
Fajr	Azan	Jamaat
4:10	4:15	
Johr	12:50	1:25
Asr	4:55	5:05
Maghrib	7:00	7:05
Esha	7:55	8:15

Source: Islamic Foundation

Impact of 15pc VAT

Power will be much more costly than it seems

By Sharier Khan

Power will be much more costly than it seems with the imposition of 15 per cent VAT on it, replacing 15 paise duty per unit under the budget for the current financial year.

"Previously, for example, on a Tk 500 bill for using 200 units of power, a consumer had to pay Tk 30 as duty, making the total Tk 530. Now, he will have to pay 15 per cent VAT on it, raising it to Tk 575," an official explained.

"For an industry, it would mean a significant rise in the cost of production," he added. The Energy Ministry had earlier suggested the Prime Minister not to impose VAT on power billing, considering its negative impact, but she went ahead with it, sources said.

High rate of pilferage in the guise of system loss has already made the state-run power sector a highly losing concern. Imposition of VAT will increase pilferage and the government will not be able to increase revenue from the power sector, observers said.

The power tariff varies for different types of consumers. The tariff for the agriculture sector is the lowest (Tk 1.8 per unit) and that for the industrial and commercial sector is the highest. The average rate is Tk 2.5 per unit.

What the power sector now needs is restoration of financial discipline, officials and experts said. But this is absolutely missing for years. In 1998

alone, PDB and DESA incurred a loss of 150 million dollars, they said.

In addition to an average system loss of 30 per cent, the power sector is seriously affected by very poor collection of revenue against bills. "PDB or DESA do not or can not collect more than 56 to 60 per cent of the billed amount for supply of power to consumers", one official said.

These losses are ultimately putting pressure on the national exchequer wherefrom salaries and other expenses of DESA and PDB are met.

"VAT is not going to improve the real scenario. In fact, the number of people who do not

See Page 12 Col 1

Drive to realise agri loans disbursed after flood

By Rafiq Hasan

The government is dissatisfied with the recovery of agricultural loans disbursed under the post-flood rehabilitation programme. The local administration has been asked to help bank officials in realising the dues.

The cabinet division recently instructed all deputy commissioners (DCs) to this effect. The DCs were also asked to communicate the message to the Thana Nirbahi Officers (TNOs).

"As of 31 January '99 agri-loans worth Tk 860.18 crore was recovered which is considered 'unsatisfactory'. The amount recovered during the same period, last fiscal was Tk 890.55 crore," the cabinet division letter observed.

The Bangladesh Economic Survey 1999 circulated with the annual budget documents noted that during fiscal '98-99 upto April, the amount of agri-loans disbursed and realised was Tk 2293.55 crore and Tk 1185.76 crore, respectively.

The cabinet division further said "The scope of getting agricultural loan in future depends

on this year's recovery. If the disbursed loan is not recovered, the banks will suffer and farmers will face difficulty in getting loans in future."

The letter appreciated the role of the local administration in helping in loan disbursement following the devastating flood, last year. "The local administration should co-operate with bank officials in realising the agricultural loans now."

Banking circle sources informed that some state owned banks were facing tremendous difficulty in recovering the loans.

They said that farmers were reluctant in returning the money as they were hoping that the government will waive the loan as was done in 1991-92.

The BNP government had then waived agricultural loans upto Tk 5,000.

Some banks have opened agri-loan recovery camps at the union level to motivate farmers to return the money. Sonali Bank sources said that it has opened 1140 camps at different unions to recover loans.

"The results were great after

opening the loan recovery camps and around Tk 60 crore has been realised," said a high official of the bank.

Farmers come to the recovery camps and are asked when they will be able to return the money. The camps have also made the farmers optimistic about getting loans in future, the official claimed.

Against the loan disbursement target of Tk 683 crore the bank disbursed Tk 360 crore agri-loan under its post-flood rehabilitation programme this fiscal.

Sources at Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB), the largest operator in the rural areas, however, had a different story to tell.

They said that the bank did not face any difficulty in realising agri-loans this year. "We have already fulfilled 90 per cent of the loan recovery target" said a high official of the bank.

Initially, the bank's agri-loan disbursement target was Tk 1250 crore, this year it was increased to Tk 1500 crore. The loan recovery target for fiscal '98-99 was fixed at Tk 1150

See Page 12 Col 4

Prisoner allegedly tortured to death in Khulna

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, July 2: Abdul Matin, 35, an FIR-named accused in a murder case, was found dead in the *hajrat* of Daulatpur thana Thursday evening.

Matin was arrested on June 11 from Pirganj thana of Rangpur district on charge of murdering his wife Rabeya Khatun, 24, on April 24 at Senpara under Daulatpur thana. He was sent to Khulna from Pirganj thana on Wednesday (June 29). Khulna CMM granted four days' remand on Thursday for his interrogation as prayed for by the investigation Officer (IO).

The accused was, however, found dead in the *hajrat* before the OC received the remand order. His body was found hanging with his *lungi* from the water pipe.

OC Nikhil Mondol said that the accused committed suicide. But other prisoners in the *hajrat* said that Matin succumbed to fatal head injuries.

See Page 12 Col 5

KU teachers' ultimatum to VC

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, July 2: Teachers of Khulna University have given a deadline till Sunday to the Vice Chancellor to cancel the leave of Dr Azad Khan Head of the Department of Computer Science and Engineering and take action against him for his alleged subversive activities.

The subversive activities are being done allegedly at the instigation of honorary Treasurer of the university Sardar Abdur Razzak who is Vice-president of Khulna district Awami League, campus sources said.

The teachers have threatened to stop all academic activities if no action is taken against Dr Khan by Sunday, the sources said.

The students of the university are also agitating for about a month now to press their four-point demand which include removal of Sardar Abdur Razzak for his alleged attempt to politicise the university.

Their demands also include renaming of a new women's hall after noted woman freedom fighter Taramon Bibi Bir Pratik.

Stealing of the nameplate of the women's hall allegedly by some activists of the ruling party's student front few days ago

See Page 12 Col 8

398 more outlaws and terrorists surrender

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, July 2: A total of 398 outlaws and terrorists surrendered to the police at a function at the Circuit House Maidan here this afternoon in presence of Home Minister Mohammad Nasim.

They laid down 286 firearms and 254 bullets which were displayed at the function, organised by the district police administration. Hundreds of people witnessed the surrender ceremony braving downpour.

Officials said, the outlaws who surrendered to the police belong to Biplobi Communist Party, Purbia Banglar Communist Party and Krishak Sangram Samiti. The rest terrorists of various nature like pirates and dacoits.

The firearms deposited with the police included one SMG, four 303 rifles, seven foreign-

made guns, 29 Indian shutter guns and one foreign revolver while the rest are 'locally-made' pipeguns, SBL guns, pistols and revolvers.

The persons who have surrendered will be housed in Noornagar C&B Community Centre which has already been declared as sub-jail.

Addressing the function as the chief guest, the Home Minister said the deadline to surrender arms and ammunition has been further extended till July 30, 1999. He urged the remaining outlaws and terrorists to lay down their arms within the stipulated time.

He said the coming operation that began on April 22 this year would also continue.

"After expiry of the deadline, the coming operation would be

See Page 12 Col 8

Pakistan renews call for talks on Kashmir 'Major breakthrough imminent' to avert Indo-Pak war

ISLAMABAD, July 2: Pakistan's political and military leaders met today to discuss the showdown with India over Kashmir amid reports that a peace formula could be made public in the next 72 hours, reports Reuters.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif chaired a meeting of the Defence Committee of the Cabinet (DCC) to review Islamabad's next step after intense diplomatic pressure to find a solution to the worst showdown with India in three decades.

The News, an independent-minded English language newspaper, reported from New York in its last edition that a major breakthrough to avert the threat of a third Indo-Pakistan war over Kashmir was expected imminently.

It quoted reliable sources as saying "a formula is being worked out which may be acceptable to both India and Pakistan".

The newspaper gave no details of the formula but said "good news" for the people of India and Pakistan could be made public, possibly in 48 to 72 hours, depending on the communication and consideration of both governments."

A senior government official said the DCC meeting, attended by chiefs of Pakistan's Army, Navy and Air Force and top ministers, would discuss "recent developments" on Kashmir.

Another report says Pakistan warned India today of "serious consequences" if it widened the conflict and renewed a call for talks to resolve the crisis.

A statement after a meeting of the DCC said Pakistan was "prepared to deal with any eventuality and to give an effective response to any action of aggression".

India said it did not believe the conflict over Kashmir

would widen because its armed forces were gradually pushing infiltrators back towards the military control line dividing the arch-foes.

Foreign ministry spokesman Raminder Singh Jassal told a news briefing: "We do not share assessments which have been voiced in some places suggesting a widening of the conflict."

Pakistan's DCC repeated the stand that "all issues, including the current crisis in Kashmir, should be resolved through negotiations in the spirit of the Lahore Declaration".

The declaration was signed by Sharif and Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee last February in the Pakistani city of Lahore, pledging to intensify efforts to settle the Kashmir and other disputes and take steps to avert an accidental nuclear conflict.

"The committee expressed

See Page 12 Col 8

5 drown in Netrokona boat capsizes

NETROKONA, July 2: At least five people, including four minor girls, drowned when an engine boat capsized in Paglikhali Khal under Barhatta thana in the district this afternoon, police said, reports BSS.

Police Superintendent, Netrokona, told the agency over telephone that the boat was going to Otupur from Dharmapasha under Sunamganj district with 15 to 20 passengers aboard.

The small boat went down due to overloading, witnesses said.

Local people recovered five bodies, identified as Shah Alam, 25, Smriti, 10, Lovely, 9, Happy, 5, Eiti, 3, from the canal.

Tk 2.3 lakh looted from Manarat School

By Staff Correspondent

A gang of dacoits looted about Tk 2.3 lakh from Manarat International School and College at Gulshan in the city in the early hours of yesterday.

The institution authorities said 12 dacoits entered the campus crossing the boundary wall. They tied down two security guards and took away the money from some almshouses in different rooms.

The gang entered the campus at around 2 am and left at about 4:30 am.

An official at the institution told The Daily Star that they informed the incident to Gulshan police. But police, when contacted last night, said they did not receive any written complaint about this.

Stock dealer denies allegation

By Staff Correspondent

Sinha & Company, a Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) stock dealer, has denied its involvement in any share scam.

"False allegation has been made against us regarding involvement in the share scam," the company said in a rejoinder to a report published in The Daily Star on June 29.

"Our company has been involved in the stock exchange for more than 18 years and there has not been a single allegation

See Page 12 Col 3

Encroachers occupy 70pc of city's pavements

By Morshed Ali Khan

More than 70 per cent of pavements along the city roads cannot be used by pedestrians due to encroachment, experts on urban matters said.

Indiscriminate encroachment by hawkers and traders, dumping of construction materials and kitchen waste, faulty designs and bad condition of the 2,000-km pavement network in the city have pushed lakhs of pedestrians off their walkways.

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), custodian of the city roads and pavements, is not taking any step to clear the pavements. About the reason for this, Mayor Mohammad Hanif said, "Those poor people are earning a living. Unless we can rehabilitate them how can we evict them?"

Sources concerned pointed out that as the mayoral election

is nearing, DCC would not disturb the hawkers and traders now.

DCC's present policy of overlooking the matter has worsened the situation in the last six months. In different areas including Gulistan Paltan and Motijheel, hawkers have now occupied both sides of the pavements, leaving only a narrow passage in between for thousands of pedestrians.

Sixty per cent of the users of city roads are pedestrians. Prof Nazrul Islam of the Centre for Urban Studies said most of the city's 40 per cent poor are regular users of footpaths and they are the worst sufferers due to the encroachment.

Thousands of female garment workers who usually walk to and from their factories are

See Page 12 Col 2

Uneasy clam in Tanbazar brothel

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, July 2: An uneasy calm prevailed in the Tanbazar brothel in the town today after Thursday's killing of a woman, a sex worker of the brothel.

A large number of sex workers, who had fled the brothel after the killing, started returning to their workplace today after a large contingent of police was deployed in and around the brothel to beef up security.

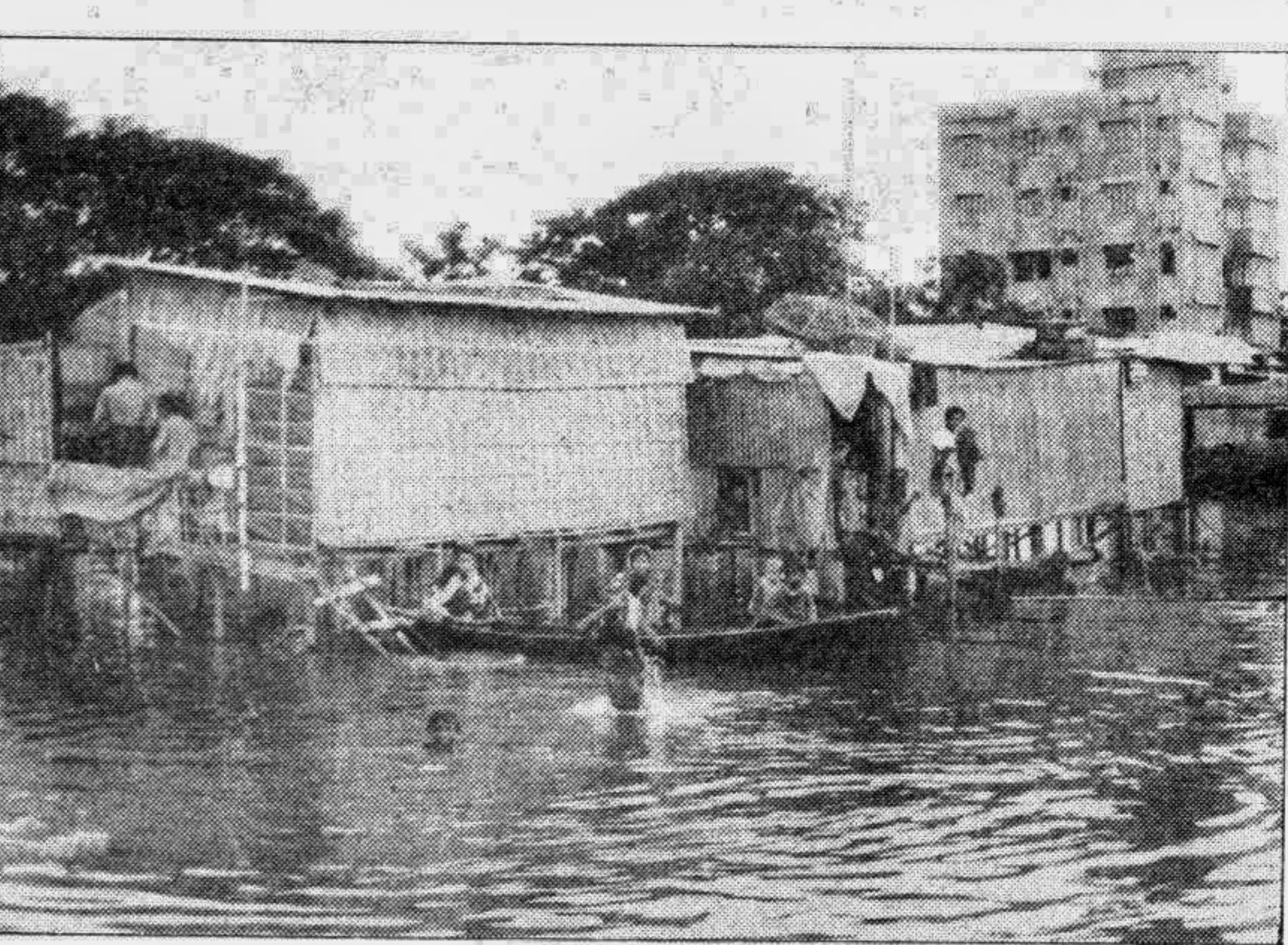
Eminent citizens and senior government officials of the town held a meeting at the DC office in the morning and discussed security and rehabilitation of the sex workers. The meeting, attended by Shamim Osman MP, the DC and the SP, resolved that the sex workers would be shifted from the brothel only after making arrangement for their rehabilitation.

The meeting also called upon the law enforcing agencies to launch a massive hunt for the culprits involved in the Jesmin killing.

Later, Shamim Osman told reporters that rally or demonstration would not be allowed inside the brothel.

See Page 12 Col 7

Flood situation in 2 dists worsens



Low-lying areas in the city have been submerged by rain waters. This photo was taken from Madartek area yesterday.

—Star photo

By Staff Correspondent
Incessant rain and onrush of hill water from across the border have further worsened the flood situation in two districts.

Our Kushtia Correspondent writes: At least one lakh people in six thanas of the district have been affected by flash flood.

Of the six thanas, three are worst affected. These are Daulatpur, Kamarkhali and Khoksa. A good number of *kutcha* houses in three thanas have been damaged and road communication remained snapped.

The people in the affected areas have been facing acute crisis of drinking water as tubewells have already gone under flood water.

The Ganges and Ghorai are flowing above the danger marks. The Ganges showed 7-centimetre rise above danger level at Hardinge Bridge point while Ghorai showed a rise of 40-centimetre.

The low-lying areas in the Kushtia town have been submerged this morning following heavy rainfall.

A WDB official said with the rise in water level, the erosion by the river Ganges devoured some areas in Daulatpur and

See Page 12 Col 7

A Summer to Remember

Some things are worth waiting for. The Daily Star Summer Fashion '99 is about to hit the stands. Don't miss this exciting catalogue of the latest summer wear for men and women along with the prices of outfits as well as the names and addresses of the boutiques. 48 pages in full colour featuring the outfits and fashion tips to help you beat the heat with flair and style. This special publication will come out next week.

Book your copy now!

Circulation Department, The Daily Star,
House No-11, Road No-3, Dhanmandi
R/A, Dhaka-1205, Phone: 866771-4