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Power tariff raised by 5 poisha per unit

Star Report

The government has increased power tariff by five poisha per unit with retrospective effect from July 1 as per recommendation of the Asian Development Bank, official sources said.

Besides, power tariffs among PDB, DESA and REB have also been raised. PDB's power tariff charged from DESA has been increased by eight poisha per unit to Tk 1.8 and PDB-ESA's power tariff charged from REB also by eight poisha per unit, making it Tk 1.73.

Coupled with the imposition of 15 per cent VAT on a truncated basis, power would be much costlier at all consumers' level, said an official. "A typical middle class family which uses 300 units of power per month would now pay an additional Tk 15. The family would pay 15 per cent VAT on 55 per cent of the power consumed per month and that would be nearly double the previous duty structure," he added. The energy ministry favoured a tariff hike by 12 poisha per unit but the government decided to increase it by 5 poisha, one source mentioned. "The Cabinet suggested that PDB and DESA should try harder to reduce system loss to improve the financial health of energy sector," he said.

See page 11 Col 7

PM apprises President about her UK visit

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday apprised President Shahabuddin Ahmed about her recent visit to the United Kingdom at the invitation of British Prime Minister Tony Blair, reports UNB.

She met the President at Bangabhaban and told him that the visit has helped improve relations between the two countries.

Hasina also talked about the Bangladesh Festival she and Blair jointly inaugurated in London. The festival projecting our cultural heritage was a prestigious event for Bangladesh," she said.

She said the objective of her visit was to attract private investment from UK and the visit would provide impetus to the British participation in the field of economic development of the country.

The PM informed the President that besides official talks with her British counterpart, she met with the leaders of the British government and the opposition and discussed issues of mutual interest.

She also informed the President that Tony Blair had accepted an invitation to visit Bangladesh at a convenient time.

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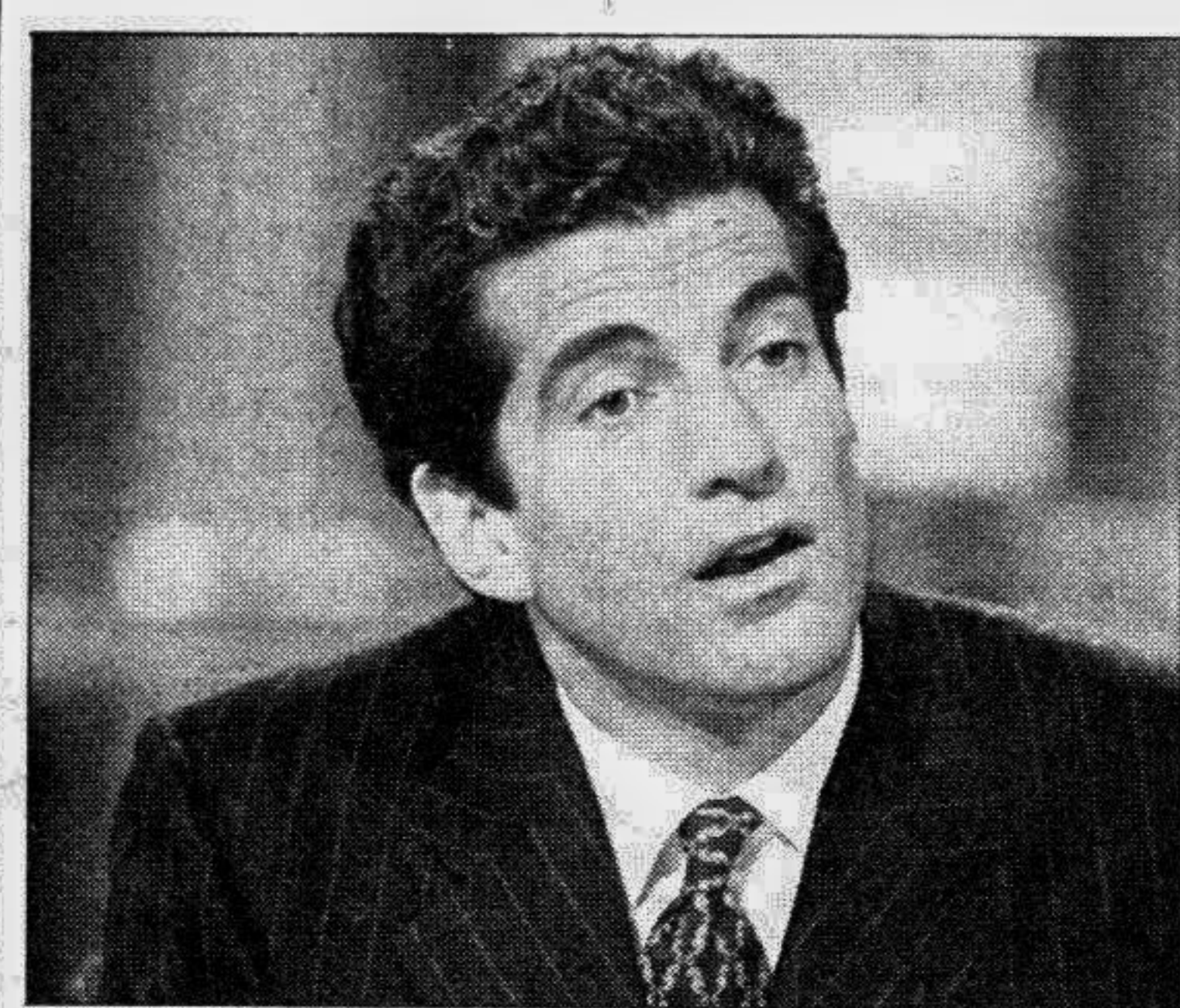
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Prayer Timings

July 18

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	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



AFP File photo of John F Kennedy Jr.

Plane with J F Kennedy Jr missing

WEST TISBURY (Massachusetts), July 17: A small plane carrying John F Kennedy Jr. to a wedding on Martha's Vineyard was reported missing early today and a search was underway off the coast of New York's Long Island, officials said, reports AP.

The plane took off at 8:45 pm (0145 GMT) Friday and was believed to be carrying Kennedy, his wife, Carolyn Bessette, and her sister and was headed to the Cape Cod-Martha's Vineyard area where the Kennedy family was gathering for a wedding, a source told The Associated Press.

The plane flew out of New Jersey and was due into Martha's Vineyard at 10 pm Friday, the source said.

The Coast Guard confirmed it was searching for the plane

with help from the Air National Guard. The search was being conducted in water off eastern tip of Long Island, along the presumed flight path of Kennedy's plane.

Jamie Gaspar, an operations specialist at Martha's Vineyard Airport, said Kennedy's plane was supposed to arrive Friday night but never did.

"I'm a little worried, because I know him personally," Gaspar said.

Kennedy is the son of one of America's most popular presidents, John F Kennedy, who was assassinated in 1963.

Eddie Martin, of Hyannisport, who described himself as a friend of the family, said he was told Kennedy was headed for Martha's Vineyard and was then to go to the wedding of a cousin, Rory, daughter of the

late Sen. Robert F Kennedy, in Hyannisport.

According to an earlier announcement from the office of Democratic Sen Edward M Kennedy, the couple was to be married Saturday before 275 guests in a private ceremony. The wedding was cancelled as the search began.

The source told the AP the plane took off from Caldwell, New Jersey, en route to Martha's Vineyard, and did not file a flight plan, to the knowledge of the Federal Aviation Administration. A flight plan was not required.

The Kennedy family contacted the FAA when the plane, a Piper Saratoga, was overdue, and the agency began checking airports along the route, the source said.

The Coast Guard and Air Na-

tional Guard then started a search.

Kennedy, 38, is the only surviving son of the 35th president. His father's assassination immediately thrust him into the public eye with the poignant photo of the little boy saluting as his father's funeral procession passed.

Unlike other family members, Kennedy never entered politics. After graduating from Brown University, he went to law school and joined the Manhattan district attorney's office.

The law didn't hold much appeal for Kennedy, and in 1995 he launched the magazine George—subtitled 'not just politics as usual.' A year later, Kennedy—once dubbed 'the sexiest man alive' by People magazine—married girlfriend Carolyn Bessette.

Police hardly raid hideouts of pirates

Defence cargo ship had no security escort

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, July 17: Despite frequent incidents of piracy at the outer anchorage of Chittagong port, no security escort was arranged for the ship carrying defence cargo imported for the Army and the Air Force, sources said.

A senior port official, when contacted, said "All cargo ships are given similar treatment when those arrive at the outer anchorage. No special security measures are normally taken by the Chittagong Port Authority for defence cargo. Those are only given priority berthing facility at the port jetties."

A source in the port security said, "Ships carrying defence cargo should be given special

escort at the outer anchorage in view of Wednesday's incident of piracy at such a vessel."

However, after unloading, the defence cargo is being delivered from Chittagong port under 'heavy escort'.

The imported ammunition were taken to Dhaka by goods train from Chittagong port today under Army escort, he said. The ship, 'MV Karen Cat', which came under attack of pirates, carried 549 tonnes of ammunition for the Army and the Air Force.

Incidents of piracy have gone up at the outer anchorage of Chittagong port and in the river Karnaphuli, posing a threat to safety and security of

cargo vessels, sources said.

Organised gangs of pirates frequently swoop on foreign cargo vessels and loot valuable goods and costly ropes used for anchoring the vessels.

As a result, most of the ship operators reportedly remain worried when they reach the outer anchorage, fearing attack by pirates.

Talking to The Daily Star, President of Steamer Agents Association Tarek Anis said, "The outer anchorage is really unsafe for cargo vessels as organised gangs of pirates are often active. Pirates looted costly ropes from many foreign ships."

See page 11 Col 7

Over 2 lakh marooned in Comilla

Flood waters continued to inundate fresh areas of five thanas in Comilla district yesterday causing damage and rendering hundreds of families homeless, reports UNB.

More than two lakh people in 30 unions in Burichang, Debidwar, Muradnagar, Chandina and Daudkandi thanas of the district remained marooned as water gushing through the damaged Gumbi embankment continued to engulf vast areas of the thanas.

Some 80 per cent of roads and houses in Chandina municipality are now under knee-deep waters while swirling waters threatened two bridges at Nimshai and Korpait on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway.

Around 35,000 people who were forced to abandon their submerged houses had taken refuge in 30 makeshift shelters. Army personnel and local administration continued to evacuate marooned people to safety.

Armed forces and Roads and See page 11 Col 6

Jamalpur AL suspends Rashed Mosharraf, brings allegations

JAMALPUR, July 17: The Jamalpur district unit of Awami League has suspended the membership of Rashed Mosharraf, State Minister for Land, for his 'anti-organisational activities', reports UNB.

The decision was taken at a meeting today of the district unit that was attended by 47 out of 55 members of the executive committee, Awami League sources said.

Chaired by district unit president Advocate Shahidullah, the meeting was attended, among others, by State Minister for Religious Affairs Moulana Nurul Islam, Abul Kalam Azad MP, Rezaul Karim Hira MP, Mirza Azam MP and Tuhura Ali MP.

Sources said the meeting decided to meet party chief and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with an appeal to remove Rashed Mosharraf from the responsibility as minister in-

charge of Jamalpur district.

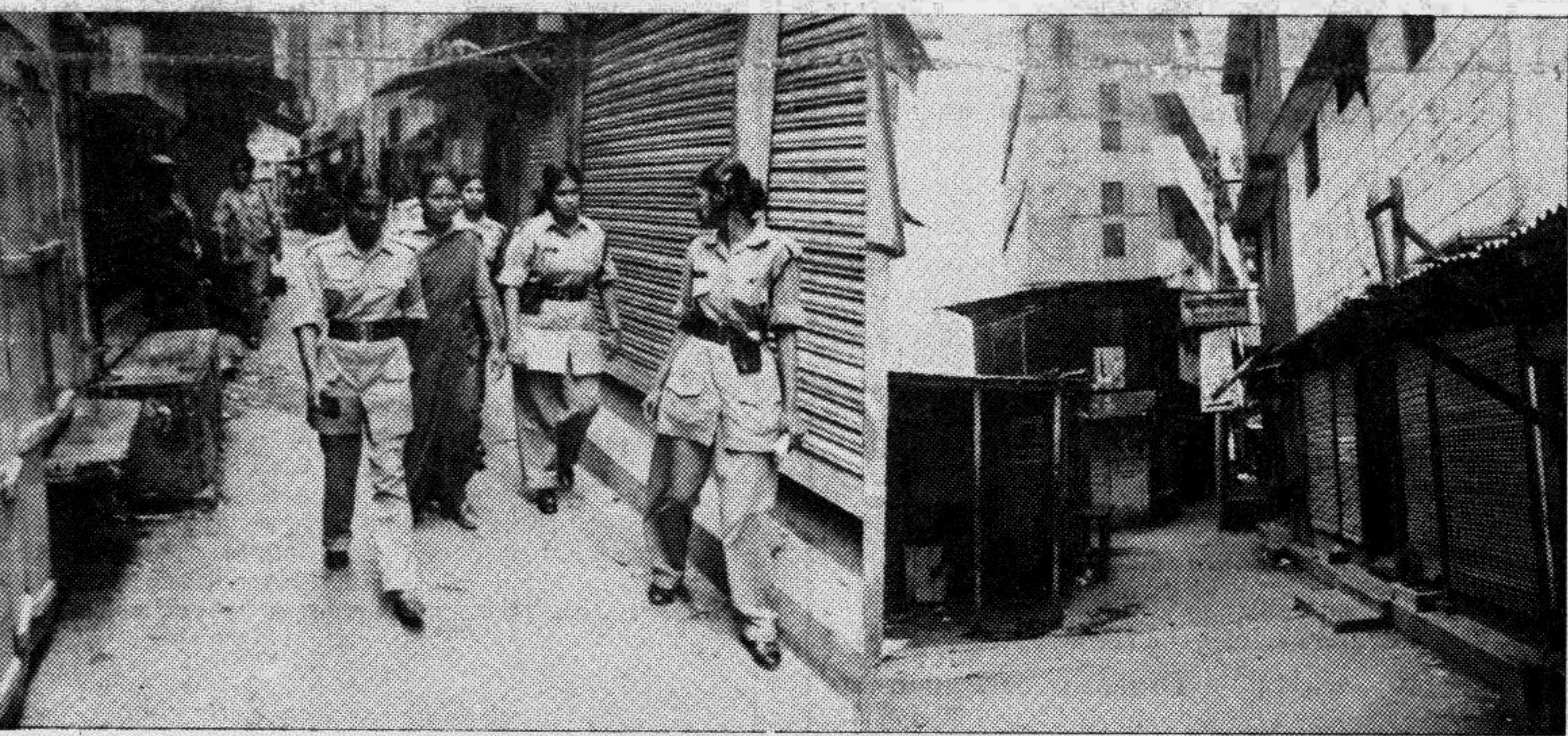
They discussed allegations against Rashed Mosharraf who is also the President of Krishak League, the farmers' wing of Awami League.

The allegations say: 1) Rashed Mosharraf has selected four nominees to contest the next general elections from four other constituencies of Jamalpur district, and that he is already campaigning for them.

2) He and his son who is chairman of Jamalpur Pourasava have played a vital role in the defeat of Awami League's chairman candidate in Dewanganj Pourasava election held on July 12.

3) He misbehaved with party MPs in the district—Moulana Nurul Islam, Abul Kalam Azad, Rezaul Karim Hira and Tuhura Ali, who went to him for a compromise.

4) He formed the Islampur See page 11 Col 8



Women police deployed (left) as the Tanbazar brothel now gives a deserted look.

—Star photo

Two-thirds of sex workers flee brothels

Exodus to spread deadly diseases in N'ganj town, fear people, experts

From Ehsanul Haque

NARAYANGANJ, July 17: Panicked sex workers of Tanbazar and Nimtoli brothels are now roaming in different areas of the town, spreading virus of deadly diseases like AIDS.

More than two thousand sex workers, who fled the tension-ridden red-light areas, have taken refuge in different areas of the town including Jimkhana, Paikpara, Deobhog, Masdair, Isdair, Channari, Bandar and even Panchabati on the outskirts. Some local people said they are worried because the sex workers have taken shelter in the residential areas.

According to a government survey, only 1058 sex workers are now staying in the two

brothels against 3,425 earlier. The exodus was triggered by tension prevailing since the murder of a sex worker at Tanbazar on July 1 and a subsequent government move to rehabilitate them.

The survey that concluded today began after a high level meeting at the Prime Minister's Secretariat on July 12 decided to rehabilitate the sex workers who are willing to give up their profession.

But the meeting left no option for those willing to continue the business. A questionnaire distributed among the inmates after the meeting made it clear that no brothel would be allowed in the district town.

This, it is believed, may have forced many of the inmates to evade the survey.

Nasrin, 25, left her 'house' at Tanbazar the day before the survey began. She is now sharing a small rented house at Deobhog with three fellow sex workers. "Yes, I am doing sex business here to earn livelihood for myself, my two children and others in the family. What else can I do? I found no client at Tanbazar brothel in 13 days," she told this correspondent yesterday.

Abdur Rahim, a resident at Masdair, said frequent movement of borkha-wearing sex workers is now in sight in his area. "Their suspicious move-

ment with clients and in search of clients have made us concerned."

Prof. Nazrul Islam, Head of the Department of Virology at the Bangladesh Sheikh Mujib Medical University, expressed deep concern that sex workers have come out of the brothels in Narayanganj. "Condoms were supplied to the sex workers earlier for prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) including AIDS. Now it has become difficult to continue it because they have spread all over Narayanganj."

"Clients of the sex workers should also be taken into consideration. The clients are a See page 12 Col 6

Talks held: Rohingya issue unresolved

By Special Correspondent

Foreign ministers of Bangladesh and Myanmar held talks yesterday in a renewed bid for a breakthrough in the impasse on repatriation of some 22,000 Rohingya refugees which had been slowed down by Yangon since last November.

The talks remained inconclusive after two hours of meeting including a tete-a-tete between the two foreign ministers who also picked up the issue again after a dinner the Bangladesh foreign minister hosted last night in honour of his Myanmar counterpart at Meghna.

They are going to talk further today, sources said with Bangladesh pressing for quick-

ening the pace of repatriation. The two foreign ministers met at state guest house Meghna after Myanmar Foreign Minister U Aung Win arrived in Dhaka yesterday afternoon for a three-day visit to Bangladesh for what he described as part of a familiarisation trip to neighbours since he took charge of the foreign ministry last year.

"We had very cordial, fruitful and useful talks, including one to one meeting... our aim is to resolve this problem," foreign minister Abdus Samad said about the nearly two hours of inconclusive talks.

The Rohingyas living in two camps in Cox's Bazar are part of See page 12 Col 2

'Black money holders, loan defaulters rule country'

By Staff Correspondent

Gano Forum president Dr Kamal Hossain has said the government represents the bank loan defaulters and black money holders, not the people. He said though the country achieved independence 28 years ago, "people could not come to power as black money holders have been dictating terms since the liberation."

Addressing a press conference yesterday at the party's central office, Dr Kamal, who is also an eminent lawyer, said his party and he himself is fighting to put the people in power. "I do not want to go to power. My sincere desire is to assume people in the power," he added.

He blasted the government for not discussing any matter

relating to national interest both in and outside the parliament. Important decisions on valuable natural resources like oil and gas have been taken without any discussion with people. Even the Jatiya Sangsad has not been informed.

Referring to controversy over recent purchase of MIG-29 jet fighters, he said the purchase involving over Tk 500 crore in foreign currency took place without any transparency. The Parliament or the parliamentary standing committee concerned were not informed about this purchase.

He said the prime minister was forced to cancel the allotment of 301 Rajuk plots following widespread public outcry. "Now the government must in-

form the people about the real reason behind this arbitrary and discriminatory action."

Expressing dissatisfaction over the role of the opposition in parliament, he said they should shun violence and show respect to the rule of law and democratic norms. They should go for movement outside the parliament only as a last resort.

Dr Kamal stressed the need for united efforts to free the country's politics for the clutches of black money and arms. The Election Commission should also have to take urgent measures to free the electoral process from the claws of black money.

Congratulating the recent verdict made by the Supreme Court against bank defaulter,

he said it is necessary to take effective and continuous steps to bring back discipline in stock exchange and other financial institutions.

He said a new type of indiscipline is being seen in the financial institutions in the name of "rescheduling". Some particular individuals are using rescheduling as a means to delay payment of long outstanding loan.

"We demand that a White Paper be published on 'rescheduling' showing who the beneficiaries are and the extent to which bank norms and relevant rules are being misapplied (abused) to confer such benefits."

Referring to press reports that a major political party is

to hire a helicopter for election campaign, he said the concerned party must have to inform the public and Election Commission how it will finance the expenditure and what is the source of the money.

Dr Kamal also demanded publication of the report of the Media Commission on autonomy of TV and radio and of the Judicial Inquiry Commission report on Rubel murder by July 31.

He further demanded the government to place necessary information, document and file on purchase of MIG-29s, allotment of 301 Rajuk plot and awarding of oil and gas blocs, Magurchhara gas explosion report and purchase or hire of helicopter.

See page 11 Col 6

BBC report

AL to hire helicopter for polls campaign

Star Report

The Awami League has decided to hire a helicopter for campaigning in national elections and also in the upcoming upazila and city corporation polls, BBC reported last night.

Though the party has denied it, a contract in this regard clearly provides for such use.

A local private aviation company is trying to procure the helicopter from Thailand or any other South-East Asian country.

The rent for the 10-seater twin-engine BK 117 helicopter will be Tk 100,000 per hour and Tk 20 lakh will be paid in advance. The chopper will be available from the first week of August.

It is mentioned in the contract that use of the helicopter in campaign will be subject to the Election Commission's approval, BBC said.

A former state minister and Awami League MP Syed Abul Hossain signed the contract with the aviation company.

AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman was not available for comment. But Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad denied that helicopter would be used for election campaign.

Following a press report on helicopter, Gano Forum President DR. Kamal Hossain at a press conference in Dhaka yesterday demanded of the government to publication of details about hiring of the helicopter, BBC added.

Munshi withdraws resignation letter

BNP lawmaker Manjurul Ahsan Munshi has withdrawn his resignation letter, reports UNB.

On Thursday, Munshi, elected from Comilla-4 (Debidwar) sent a letter to BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia resigning from the party membership expressing his resentment over the new BNP committee in Comilla North.

In another letter yesterday, Munshi withdrew his resignation letter following the removal of Abu Taher from the leadership of the party's Comilla North unit, said a party press release signed by BNP assistant office secretary Emran Saleh Prince.

Two incidents

DU to issue showcase notices on 5 students

Dhaka University authorities yesterday decided to issue showcase notices on five students for their alleged involvement in terrorist activities in two separate incidents, reports UNB.

The authorities also formed two inquiry committees to probe the incidents.

The students have to reply to the notices within seven days, otherwise, the showcase notices would be treated as temporary expulsion orders, said a DU press release.

The authorities took the decision at a meeting with Pro-VC Prof. Shahabuddin, Ali and Provost of Jasmuddin, Muhsin, Shahidullah and A F Rahman Halls yesterday afternoon.

The students against whom showcase notices will be issued include Neamul Islam Dablu and Ehsan, first year (old) students of International Relations, and Murad, first year (old) student of Political Science, evening A F Rahman Hall incident.

Two rounds of gunshots were fired on Friday in the hall centring the allotment of a seat.

The inquiry committee to investigate the incident of A F See page 11 Col 7

464 former outlaws to join Ansar today

A total of 464 former outlaws, who surrendered recently in response to the government's amnesty offer, will be recruited in the Ansar force at Khulna and Jhenidah police lines today, reports BSS.

A total of 733 former extremists from Khulna division have so far surrendered to the authorities with over 500 firearms taking the opportunity of rehabilitation promised by the government, they said.

"The educational qualifications and physical fitness of the outlaws would be relaxed for recruiting in Bangladesh Ansar," Inspector General of Police AYBI Siddiqui told BSS yesterday.

They will be taken to the Ansar Academy at Mouchak for a month's training after which they will be posted to different districts, the IGP added.



Dr Kamal Hossain