

CHT North Forest Division earns Tk 3.5 cr revenue

RANGAMATI, July 18: Chittagong Hill Tracts North Forest Division (CHTNFD) has earned a revenue of about Tk 3.40 crore exceeding its target of Tk 3.25 crore in the fiscal 1998-99 against sale proceeds of forest products from different individuals and organisations, reports BSS.

During the 1997-98 fiscal it earned over Taka 2.25 crore. Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of CHTNFD, Abdullah Al Mamun Chowdhury told BSS here on Thursday that a quantity of about 1,42,360 cubic feet of costly timbers of different species was supplied to the Bangladesh Forest Industries Development Corporation from an area of 200 acres of forest in Baghalhat forest range in 1998-99 on a subsidised rate to cater a number of forest-based industries in the country.

The process is still continuing to supply timbers to BFIDC from the area, DFO said.

CHTNFD has also supplied more than two crore bamboos to Karnaphuli Paper Mills and different individuals during the period.

KPM uses bamboo as raw material to manufacture paper while bamboos of CHTNFD are

being used across the country for domestic purposes. Meanwhile, CHTNFD has completed planting about three lakh seedlings of teak on an area of 200 acres of denuded hills in Baghalhat forest range.

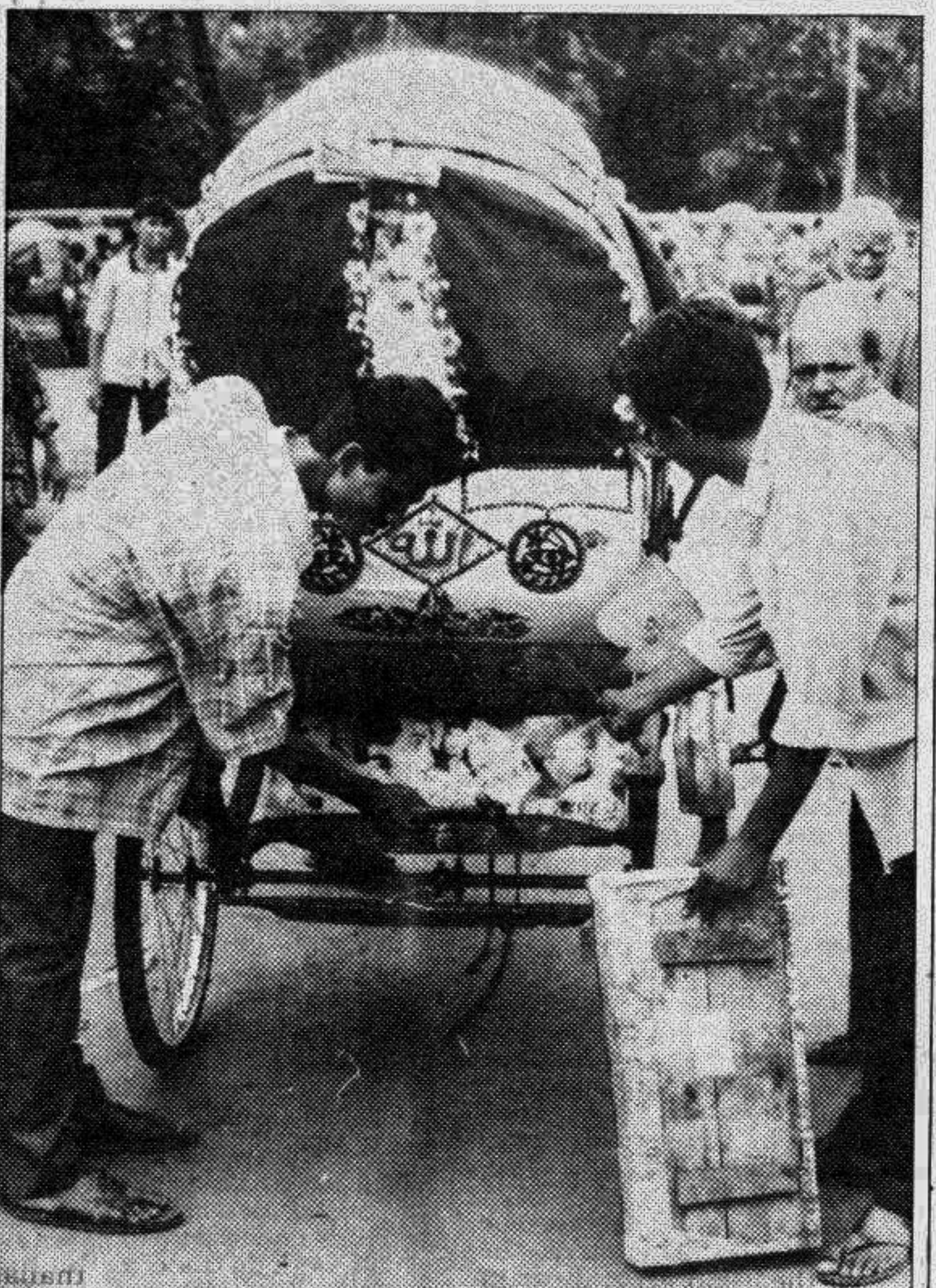
Alleged murderer held in Netrakona

NETRAKONA, July 18: Barhatta thana police arrested one person in charge of killing his wife and mother at village Alucia under Barhatta thana of Netrakona district, reports BSS.

Police sources here said today that the arrested was identified as Abdul Kashem, son of Abdul Hakim of the village Alucia whose mother Hajera Khatun, 58, and wife Nureza Khatun, 27, were found slaughtered in his house at the early hours yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, Barhatta thana police recovered the two bodies and sent them to Netrakona sadar hospital morgue for postmortem yesterday.

A murder case was filed with Barhatta police station in this connection.



Who are these people?

Two men are seen hammering down the chain from this rickshaw and seizing away its seat. Many rickshawpullers allege that it is the City Corporation's latest 'method' of removing illegal rickshaws from the city streets. However the actual identity of these two men could not be ascertained.

— Star photo by Amran Hossain

Bichitra cricket quiz draw held

The draw of the World Cup Cricket quiz competition, conducted by the weekly Bichitra, was held at the Jatiya Press Club (JPC) yesterday, reports BSS.

State Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs Obaidul Quader attended the function as the chief guest.

Presided over by acting Editor of Bichitra Baby Moudud, the function was attended, among others, by Managing Director of sponsors Bengal Fine Ceramics Limited Rashed Moudud Khan, Captain of Bangladesh cricket team Aminul Islam Bulbul, Vice-Captain Khaled Mahmud Sujon, national team members — Enamul Haq Moni and Naimur Rahman Durjoy, JPC Vice President Farid Hossain, General Secretary Swapan Kumar Saha, senior sports journalist M. Qamruzzaman.

Aminul Hasan of Mirpur and Jasimuddin of Maniknagar in Dhaka won the first and the second prize in the last round of the quiz. Aminul Hasan and Jasimuddin will get a personal computer and a Biman ticket for Dhaka-Bangkok-Dhaka route respectively.

The first prize winner of the second round Syed Atahar Iqbal (Chittagong) will get a Biman ticket for Dhaka-Kathmandu-Dhaka route while the first prize winner of the first round Nasim Mahmud (Rajshahi) will get an air ticket for Dhaka-Cox's Bazar-Dhaka route.

Krishak League rally July 21

Bangladesh Krishak League will hold a rally at the Paltan Maidan on July 21 to protest the killing of police constable Farhad on the eve of the BNP-led hartal and killing of an imam of a mosque on the hartal day, reports BSS.

At the rally, the BCL leaders expressed satisfaction over the present peaceful campus situation and urged the freshers not to get involved in the armed politics. They also urged the freshers to work for the greater welfare of the student community.

Presiding over the function, president of DU BCL unit Sajjad Hossain urged the university authorities to allocate more money for the education sector in the budget. Terming the allocation for education support sector very poor, he said that the standard of education could not be ensured if we failed to increase allocation for this sector.

He urged the university authorities to arrest the outsider and terrorists responsible for various untoward incidents on the campus. "None will be allowed to create anarchy on the campus and the BCL will do everything to ensure a peaceful campus situation," warned Sajjad.

Classes of the first year honours courses of the university began yesterday.

Ershad visits Comilla today

Jatiya Party chairman H M Ershad will visit the flood-affected Davidwar thana of Comilla district today where many people are living in relief camps following Gumi embankment collapse, reports UNB.

The former President will also visit affected schools at Jafarabad and Brahmanpara and erosion-hit Sabar Bazar.

JP president member and former minister A B M Golam Mostafa will accompany him, says a party press release.



Rains have rendered the already damaged roads of Postagola in Old Dhaka almost unusable by traffic and people alike.

President for repatriation of Rohingyas immediately

President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed yesterday said immediate repatriation of Myanmar refugees from Bangladesh is necessary in the mutual interests of the two countries, reports UNB.

His observation came when visiting Myanmar Foreign Minister U Win Aung paid a courtesy call on him at Bangabhaban yesterday.

"In the mutual interest of the two countries it is necessary to resolve the irritant issue at the earliest," President told Myanmar Foreign Minister.

In response, U Win Aung said he discussed the issue with his Bangladesh counterpart to work out a solution.

Earlier, welcoming the Myanmar Minister President said the existing friendly and bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Myanmar would be further strengthened and consolidated in future.

He stressed the need for further cooperation in various fields for mutual benefits of the two peoples.

The Myanmar Minister thanked President for receiving him and the members of his delegation.

He said as a neighbouring country, Myanmar is always eager to maintain friendly relations with Bangladesh.

Secretary to the President Ismail Hossain, Foreign Secretary C M Shah Sami, Myanmar Ambassador U Tint Win in Dhaka and Bangladesh Ambassador to Myanmar Jahangir Sadat were present.

Aung calls on Kalparanjan

Meanwhile, Myanmar being Bangladesh's neighbouring state is keen to see peace and development in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, said visiting Foreign Minister U Win Aung.

The Myanmar Foreign Minister stated this during a meeting with CHT Affairs Minister Kalparanjan Chakma at the latter's office in the city yesterday, officials said.

BCL rally at DU welcoming freshers

By DU Correspondent Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the student wing of ruling Awami League, brought out a procession and held a rally on the Dhaka University campus yesterday to welcome the freshers at the university.

Held at the main gate of Arts Faculty, the rally was addressed, among others, by BCL president Bahadur Bepari, general secretary Ajay Kar Khan, Anisur Rahman Sujit Ray Nandi, Sajjad Hossain and AKM Ajim.

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U Aung Win, Myanmar Foreign Minister, called on President Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday.

Call for cancellation of all 'unfair' gas deals

A left-leaning organisation yesterday demanded that "unfair" gas deals with multinationals be cancelled and vowed to resist "plundering" of gas and oil in the name of foreign investment, reports UNB.

National Committee to Protect Oil-Gas Resources in National Interest at an opinion sharing meeting also warned against the multinationals' bid to maximise their profit by exporting gas and exhausting gas reserves by 15 years.

Participants at the meeting, held at National Press Club, criticised US ambassador and other foreign diplomats in Dhaka for influencing the government in signing PSCs and for openly advocating gas export.

Chaired by Engr Sheikh Mohammad Shahidullah, the meeting was addressed, among others, by Prof Akmal Hossain and Prof Aftab Alam Khan of Dhaka University, Prof Anu Muhammad of Jahangirnagar University and Prof M Nurul Islam and Prof Golam Mohiuddin of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET).

Politicians Nirmal Sen, Manzurul Ahsan Khan, Muzarhidul Islam Selim, Rashed

Khan Menon, Pankaj Bhat-tacharya, Dilip Barua and Faizul Hakim were among those who attended the meeting. The committee is backed by 11 left parties.

Speakers said as per the Constitution, natural resources belong to people, so any decision regarding gas exploration or export should be determined after discussions in parliament.

They also demanded due compensation for Magurchara gas disaster from Occidental.

The committee will hold a rally at Muktangan in the city on July 22, organise rallies in other divisional cities and towns and in Mymensingh in August and a greater rally in Dhaka in early September.

Dr Anu Muhammad said gas, which has enough potentials to become the engine for future economic growth, is gradually becoming a curse for the nation due to wrong policies of PSCs.

He said if all companies start exploring gas simultaneously, gas export will become inevitable as Bangladesh does not have the infrastructure to absorb all the gas.

As per contracts, Bangladesh will have to buy gas from foreign explorers at higher price

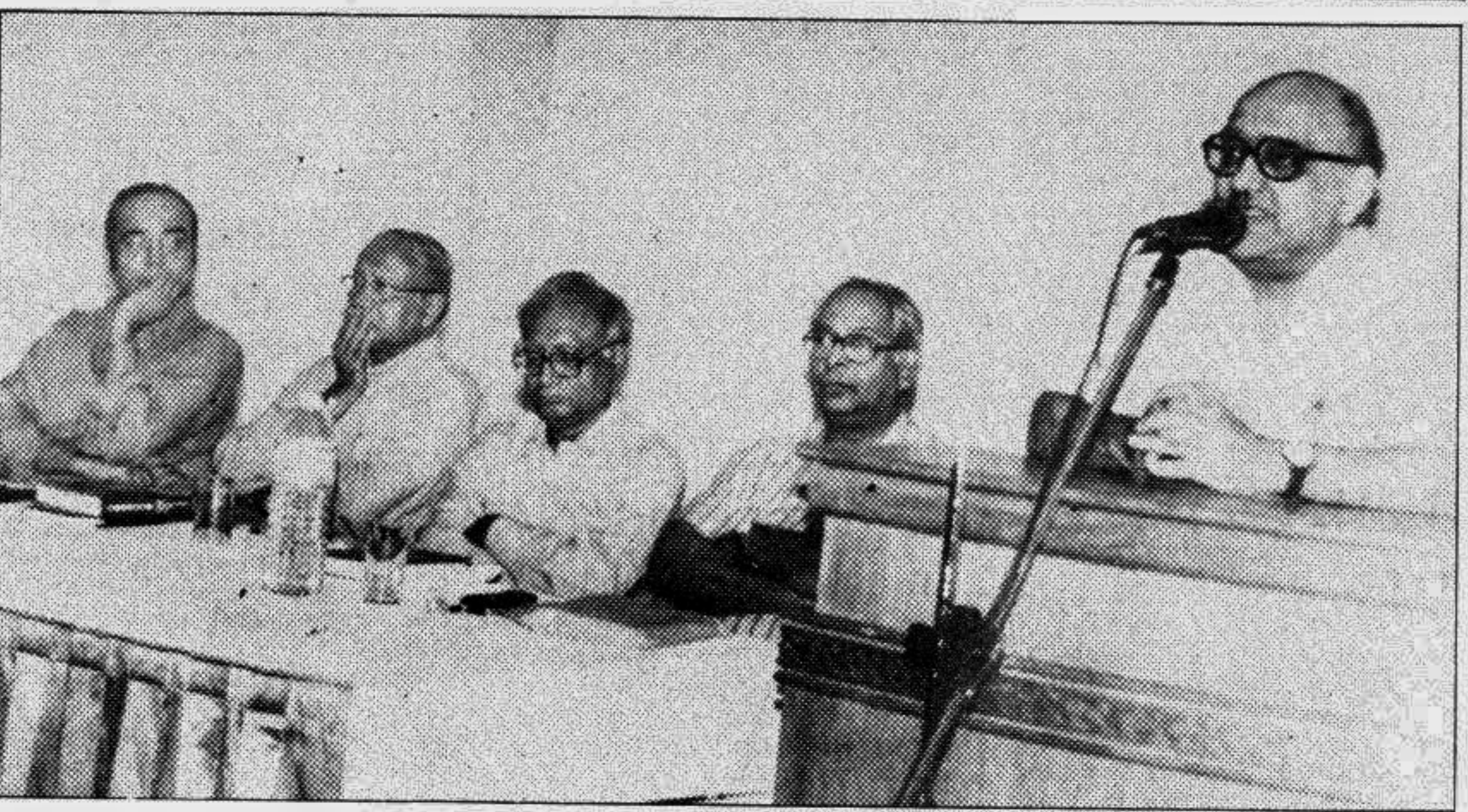
than that from BAPEX. So gas price will go up, leading to increase in production costs. As a result, domestic products will lose competitiveness with imported goods in terms of price, Prof Anu Muhammad said.

Criticising US ambassador for his open remarks favouring gas export, he said the lion's share of income from gas export will go to multinationals and ultimately Bangladesh's gas reserve will be exhausted in 15 years.

He said foreign coterie and their local collaborators and bureaucrats should be exposed publicly and punished for all uneven gas deals.

Prof Akmal Hossain said the government even does not have the courage to demand compensation from Occidental for Magurchara gas explosion. He said there is no debate in parliament over gas issues. "Is parliament only for mud-slinging and character assassination?" he asked.

Prof M Nurul Islam demanded publication of inquiry committee report on Magurchara gas disaster. If the accident was caused due to their fault, they should be sued, he said.



Prof Rehman Sobhan speaking at a review session of Enayetullah Khan's "A testament of time" yesterday at the BRAC Centre Inn. Seen in the picture are (from left) Enayetullah Khan, Ataur Rahman, Sirajul Islam Chowdhury and Mohiuddin Ahmed.

Rathajatra celebrated in Kushtia

KUSHTIA, July 18: Rathajatra, one of the greatest religious festival of Hindu community, was celebrated at Rathkola of Kushtia town on Wednesday, reports BSS.

Rathajatra started from Gyor Mandir here and carried up to Borobazar Rajgait point. It will remain there for seven days and will be returned back on the day of Uto Rath.

A mela was held on this occasion. Thousands of people attended the mela. People in general purchased all sorts of necessary commodities and earthen dolls for children from the mela.

108 UP complexes built at a cost of Tk 28cr

Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman yesterday said that the present government has so far constructed 108 new model union parishad complexes at a cost of Taka 28 crore for the betterment of socio-economic condition of the rural people, reports BSS.

"Four hundred and forty-six more such complexes will be built by the year 2001 at an estimated cost of Taka 50 crore," he said.

He was inaugurating the newly-constructed Gazaria Union Parishad model complex under the district.

Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) constructed the Gazaria Union Complex at a cost of Taka 30 lakh.

Chief Engineer of LGED Monwar Hussain Chowdhury attended the inaugural function as the special guest.

Taka devalued again

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The taka was devalued four times in 1996, seven times in 1997, three times in 1998 and once so far this year.

With the latest dose of depreciation — the 15th under the incumbent government — the Bangladesh currency has now shed Tk 7.75 in three years and around Tk 16 in the last 10 years against the greenback. It was depreciated on 21 occasions during the five-year tenure of the BNP government.

The present devaluation was hardly considered a surprise by economic observers as they were expecting it for sometime. This was particularly so in the context of the most recent depreciation of the currencies in many neighbouring countries.

Omar Haider Chowdhury, a Research Director of BIDS, said normally devaluation would mean that exports would become competitive and remittances would increase but unless government improved the efficiency of its delivery system, the idea of devaluation would be defeated. Efforts to net in remittances through official channels have to be stepped up, he said.

"Unless volume of exports is augmented, we cannot take benefit from devaluation," Chowdhury however felt that there was nothing wrong with devaluation if it was aligned with the competing markets.

Another BIDS researcher, Dr Hussain Zillur Rahman, felt the recent devaluation alone may raise the inflation rate by one to two percentage points.

However, the devaluation move is likely to be greeted by exporters in the jute, frozen foods and leather sectors which are trying to enhance their foreign exchange earnings, as most sectors have generally suffered a decline in export volume recently. Only readymade garments have been able to in-

crease their exports while tea among the traditional sectors has succeeded in retaining its export edge.

FBCCI president Abdul Awal Mintoo giving his reaction to The Daily Star felt that the taka was overvalued "at the moment". Export would be competitive, remittances would increase and consumer price index in terms of the rural areas would not be much affected. He said since the country does not import rice at the moment, this was a good move to make a correct adjustment of the taka.

Vice President of Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) Nurul Haq Sikder welcomed the move saying the devaluation process should be continued till what he said "a realistic exchange rate is established". Speaking for the booming ready-made garments sector that last year netted over three billion dollars in import earnings, he said, "Devaluation of the taka was necessary for the survival of Bangladesh exporters competing with the neighbouring countries in the world market."

That, however, is a poor consolation for those who will have to dig deep into their pockets for anything that has import content.

Faezul condoles AL leader's death

State Minister for Jute A K Faezul Huq on Saturday visited the residence of Swarupkathi thana Awami League leader Late Tarun Dev in Pirojpur district and expressed his sympathy for the members of the bereaved family, reports BSS.

Earlier, at a condolence meeting, he recalled the political career of valiant freedom fighter Tarun Dev and described him as a dedicated and sincere political leader, an official press release said.

No signs of JFK

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shore on Saturday, making it seem improbable that the 38-year-old Kennedy, his wife, Carolyn Bessette, 33, and her sister, Lauren Bessette, 35, could be found alive.

But US Coast Guard Rear Admiral Richard Larabee, who was directing the search, said late on Saturday "We are not ready to give up this yet and we are going to continue to focus on search and rescue."

The plane crash stunned Americans and revived heart-rending memories of a fabled family cursed by early tragic deaths, including the assassinations of John Jr's father, President John F Kennedy, and his uncle, Sen Robert Kennedy.

The New York Air National Guard, which had planned to search through the night using an infrared-equipped helicopter, abandoned its search in the early hours due to excessive haze.

Many Americans feared the worst when the news of the plane's disappearance broke on Saturday morning. And as with the assassinations of John Jr's father, they dropped everything on a balmy summer day to stay glued to their TV sets for news.

TV networks dumped their regular shows to offer wall-to-wall coverage.

The Kennedy family is considered by many to be the US version of royalty and John F Kennedy Jr, its crown prince.

Tall, handsome, charming and courteous, the young Kennedy avoided scandal that struck other members of his family. People magazine once labeled him "the sexiest man alive."

His wife, Carolyn, is famed

cancelled and instead 50 members of the Kennedy family had a mass at their Hyannisport compound in Cape Cod to pray for their safe return.

John Jr was a relative novice pilot having received his license only in April 1998. Flying became his passion, along with "George," the political magazine he founded and edited. But his mother, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, had years opposed the idea of his taking up flying and he delayed doing so until after she died in 1994.

Kennedy took off from the Essex County Airport in Fairfield, New Jersey, at 8:38 pm on Friday night (0038 GMT on Saturday) and had been expected in Martha's Vineyard at about 10 pm (0200 GMT on Saturday), the Coast Guard said.

The Kennedy family alerted authorities at 2 am EDT Saturday (0600 GMT) that the plane had not arrived, officials said.

John F Kennedy Jr will always be remembered by Americans as a solemn three-year-old in a blue coat and short pants sailing the flag-draped coffin of his slain father. That photograph was shown repeatedly on Saturday as networks strove to report the story without raising false hope.

After many romances, Kennedy married Carolyn Bessette, a publicist for designer Calvin Klein, in September 1996.

New Yorkers left bouquets of flowers outside the Manhattan apartment where Kennedy and his wife live. A Yankee Stadium, a moment of silent prayer was observed at the game between the Yankees and the Atlanta Braves.

Kennedy's only sibling, Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg, was reportedly travelling to Massachusetts from a white water rafting trip in Idaho.

President Bill Clinton called members of the family, including Sen Ted Kennedy. "All our prayers and thoughts are with the families of those on board," a White House statement said.

Tree plantation programme held in Kishoreganj

KISHOREGANJ, July 18: A day-long tree plantation programme and distribution of seedlings among the students was held at New Town Government Primary School recently, reports BSS.

Organised by the Reporters Club, Kishoreganj, the function was attended by the Police Superintendent Benzir Ahmed as the chief guest.

President of Reporters Club M A Latif presided over the function.

The function was attended, among others, by general secretary Muhammad Nasim Bachchu, Advaita Abdul Aziz, journalists and the elite of the district.

5000 lay siege to Palash Poursava

NARSINGDI, July 18: Nearly 5,000 people of Ghorasal area in Palash thana laid a siege to the Palash Poursava (municipality) for six hours today demanding change of its name, reports UNB.

The siege was to press for changing the name of Palash Poursava to Ghorasal Poursava.

Earlier, the demonstrators in a procession paraded different roads of the Ghorasal Palash industrial area and halted movement of traffic there for two hours from 1 pm.

Three months back, the government declared Palash Union Parishad, 8 kilometres from the district town, as municipality and named it Palash Poursava.

The Petrobangla official claimed that Cairn had initially come up with a budget of 19 million dollars and not 6.47 million dollars. He said that the budget included 6.47 million dollars as cost for mobilisation and demobilisation of drilling equipment. Later, Petrobangla negotiated over these costs and brought the budget down to 11.67 million dollars.

Petrobangla had previously been too flexible about exploration budgets under PSCs. It had approved exploration budgets without much negotiations. But recently no budget has been approved without thorough negotiations," he said.

He further said that Occidental's exploration budgets for Ratna, Kafna and Moulavibazar-2 were thoroughly reviewed before approval and as a result, the approved budgets were much lower than what those were before.

Petrobangla

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South Sangu exploration well drilling was very competitive and rational.

The Daily Star last week reported that Petrobangla oddly approved this budget in February this year though Cairn late last year came up with a budget of 6.47 million dollars and then with another revised budget of 9.5 million dollars.