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Today's issue 20 pages

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BNP govt had approved transit in '80, says PM

BEANIBAZAR, Sylhet, July 31: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today denounced the opposition-called-hartal against 'transshipment' to India and said the then BNP government of General Ziaur Rahman had approved transit facility under an agreement signed in 1980, reports BSS.

"The BNP government had approved transit facility to India while our government agreed for transshipment of commodities," she said while addressing a public meeting here this afternoon.

Sheikh Hasina said her government had approved in principle the transshipment facility which would benefit the Bangladesh government. She said with the introduction of this facility Bangladesh would annually earn about Tk 2000

See Page 12 Col 4

36 pc pass NU Degree (Pass) Exams

The National University yesterday published the results of Degree (Pass) and Certificate Course Examinations of 1998, reports BSS.

The percentage of pass is 35.70.

A total of 1,84,326 students appeared in BA (Pass), BSS (Pass), BSc (Pass), BCom (Pass), B Music (Pass) and Certificate Course Examinations. Of them 65,812 came out successful. Of the successful candidates, 45,323 are male and 20,489 female.

As many as 87,363 candidates appeared in the BA (Pass) Examinations. Of them, 28,959 came out successful.

Of the successful candidates, 130 got first division, 19,242 second division and 9,587 third division. The percentage of pass is 33.15.

In BSS (Pass) Examinations, a total of 48,893 candidates appeared. Of them, 16,807 came out successful. The percentage of pass is 34.38.

Of the successful candidates, eight secured first division, 10,069 second division and 6,730 third division.

In BSc (Pass) Examinations, 15,856 candidates appeared. Of them, 6,457 came out successful. The pass percentage is 40.72.

Of the successful candidates, 177 obtained first division,

See Page 12 Col 7

RU medical centre ransacked over death of student

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, July 31: The agitated students ransacked the medical centre of Rajshahi University this morning protesting death of a student of the Sociology Department Thursday noon apparently due to negligence of the doctors.

The students also submitted a memorandum to the Vice-Chancellor demanding removal of the doctors responsible.

Sources said, about 500 students of the Sociology Department brought out a procession protesting the death of Akram Hossain, a final year student of Sociology Department. They alleged that Akram died due to negligence and wrong treatment of the doctor at the medical centre. The processionists also laid a siege to the office of the Vice-Chancellor. They withdrew the siege programme after the VC assured them of taking necessary action.

Inside Today

Article
Living on Edge
Column: Between the Lines
by Kuldip Nayer
Page 4

Supplements
Today's 20-page issue of The Daily Star contains one page supplement on 'Breast Feeding Week '99' on page 9 and a four-page supplement on the 'Founding Anniversary of Swiss Confederation' on pages 17 to 20

Prayer Timings

August 1	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-10	4-15
Johr	12-50	1-25
Asr	5-00	5-10
Maghrib	6-55	7-00
Esha	7-55	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

'Stop re-employment on retirement'

Inefficiency, corruption grip admn: President

President Shahabuddin Ahmed has said inefficiency and corruption have gripped the age-old administrative system, requiring overhauling and gradual decentralisation, reports UNB.

"Stagnation has bedevilled the traditional administrative system. Inefficiency and corruption have gripped the administration," he told the inaugural session of a workshop on "Public Administration Reforms," in the city yesterday.

"In every state, the first and foremost responsibility is maintenance of law and order, ensuring security of life and property ..

Officials in undemocratic countries consider themselves as rulers or masters of the people. Under such a situation, there remains no scope for the people or their representatives to take part in welfare activities of the state," the President added.

He thought that the age limit for retirement of government servants should be raised in view of increase in longevity, but strongly opposed re-employment on retirement.

Referring to recommendations of the Public Administration Reforms Commission, Shahabuddin said senior officials who have failed in their responsibility are hoping extension of service or re-appointment on retirement.

He said the retirement age might be raised by a couple of years from 57 years now. In India and Pakistan the age limit has been increased to 60 years.

The president said there should be no compromise on certain things and stressed punctuality of all officials.
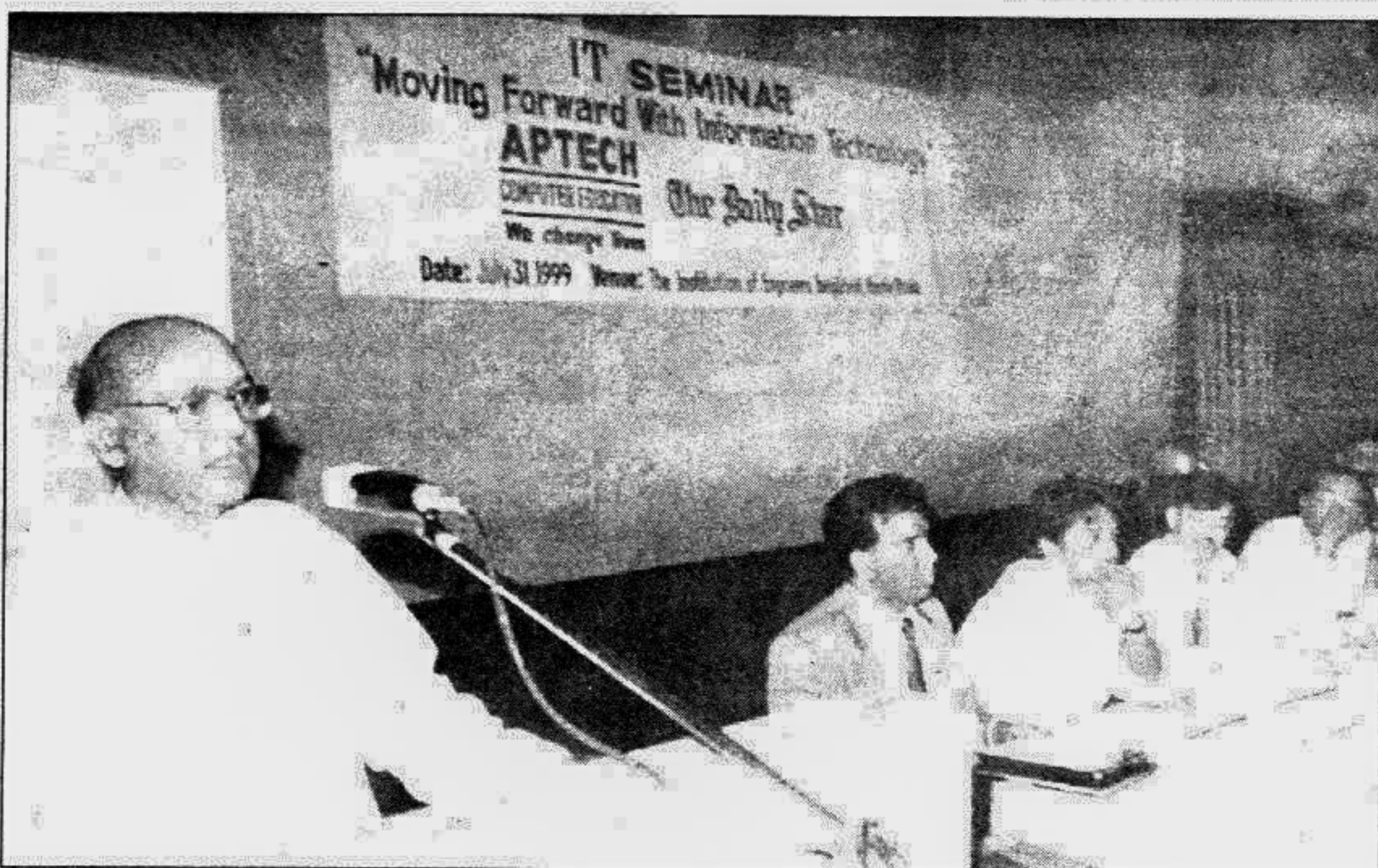
"Seniors today can not question their subordinates as they themselves do not come to office on time," said the President.

"There is no alternative to sincerity, honesty and hard work," he said, and advised officials to devote more to people's service.

Shahabuddin said reforms in the administration would be effective with proper coordination between the public administration and local government administration.

Advocating a strong local government system with people's representatives, the President suggested gradual transfer

See Page 12 Col 3

A leap into future
Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed speaks at a conference of IT professionals, opinion leaders and entrepreneurs at the Institution of Engineers yesterday. The Daily Star and Aptech Computer Education co-sponsored the event that also drew several hundred young learners. — Star photo

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Friday's surrender in Khulna

Only 5 out of 110 are 'listed' terrorists!

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, July 31: Only five out of 110 who surrendered to police on Friday at Kalpataru Market, Daulatpur, were 'listed terrorists'.

According to a source in KMP, over 100 'listed terrorists' of the city did not surrender responding to the amnesty declared by the government. The amnesty deadline expired at midnight last night.

Terrorists involved in political murders and absconding FIR-named accused are still at large. So for example, the alleged killers of JP leader Shaikh Abul Kashem didn't surrender. They have been absconding since the murder. Kashem and car driver, Nikhil, were gunned down on April 25, 1995.

The alleged killers of JCD central leader Wahiduzzaman Chanchal did not respond to the amnesty. Chanchal was brutally murdered on October 19, 1998.

The alleged killers of Jubo League leader Zahiruddin Panna, Awami League leader Abu Hasan Tarafdar, Chhatra League leader Anowar Ahmed and Jubo League leader Shajahan did not surrender. Panna was killed on March 25, 1999. Hasan Tarafdar was killed on April 29 this year and Anwar on January 12.

Besides, on August 24, 1998, BCL leader Anowar Kamal was gunned down at Khalishpur and on January 10 this year freedom fighter and CBA leader of Peoples Jute Mills, F M Sirajul Islam were hacked to death inside the mill.

All the murders were committed as a sequel to intraparty conflicts as stated in the FIRs.

The most wanted terrorist and professional killer Ershad Shikdar refused to surrender as he is still being harboured by a faction of the ruling party, said DC (South) of KMP.

Yet, our hunt for him is going on as he is wanted in six murder cases, he added.

'Fill up vacant posts of secy without delay'

By Special Correspondent

The Upa-Sachib Forum has reiterated its demand for filling up of all vacant posts of Secretary, Additional Secretary and 175 posts of Joint Secretary immediately.

It has also demanded cancellation of all contract appointments and an end to the system.

The Forum at a recent meeting adopted some a resolutions. It urged the government to create posts for promotion of deputy secretaries who have completed 25 years of service,

See Page 12 Col 2

Only 86 postmen appointed for city since '72

By Mustak Hossain

Only 86 postmen were appointed for the city since independence although its population increased by more than four times over the period.

In 1972, the city's population was 20 lakh with 269 postmen. The population rose to 90 lakh in 1996 but the number of postmen was raised to only 355, sources in the Postal Department said.

There were 90 post offices in the city in 1972. The number is 113 now, they said.

Lack of adequate postmen and other staff is the main obstacle in the way of improvement of services, they said.

"Efficiency in postal service largely depends on delivery of mail in time. We can not give good service due to lack of manpower," an official said.

Postal documents received by the Airport Postal Shorting Office (APSO) in the city is increasing every day but the number of mail operators remained at 80 in the last 12 years, they said.

The situation in Chittagong is no better. Its population increased to about 30 lakh in 1996 from 12 lakh in 1972 but the number of post offices was raised to only 55 from 42 over the period.

There are 441 vacant posts in the Postal Department now, according to a report of the department.

Of the vacant posts, 23 are in the Postal Directorate, 80 in Dhaka Circle, 139 in Chittagong

See Page 12 Col 4

Bangladeshi dies while being smuggled into Singapore

SINGAPORE, July 31: Three illegal workers died, apparently of suffocation, when a truck carrying 35 men and women from India, Bangladesh and China attempted to smuggle them into Singapore from Malaysia, a newspaper reported today, says AP.

Two men, a 36-year-old Indian and a 26-year-old Bangladeshi, were found dead when customs officials pulled the canvas off the truck. A third man whose nationality was not given died in hospital. Seven others were also hospitalised and the rest were arrested, The Straits Times reported.

Illegal immigrants can be whipped and imprisoned in Singapore before being deported at their own expense. Women are not flogged.

It was the second truck-load of illegal workers discovered this month at the crossing between the two countries.

A truck driver who was parked at a check-point behind the vehicle carrying the illegal workers on Friday told customs officers he had seen people in the back of the truck, the newspaper said.

When officers pulled away the canvas sheet they found 27 men and eight women.

On July 12, the paper said, officers at the Woodlands border check-point found 40 illegal immigrants from China, Myanmar, Bangladesh, India, and Thailand, also in a Malaysian-registered truck.

Bangladesh provides 'lowest' subsidy & price support to agriculture

By Reaz Ahmad

Bangladesh provides one of the lowest subsidy and price support to agriculture even as policymakers hailed it as the saviour of the economy after last year's devastating floods.

According to the ministry of agriculture (MOA), subsidy to agriculture amounts to only 3.3 per cent of total farmgate value of agricultural products.

Earlier, addressing a press conference in the city the minister concerned mentioned a figure that says that the country's aggregate measure of support (AMS) to agriculture is Tk 981 crore.

Dr M Asaduzzaman, a research director of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) notes that volume of subsidy and price support in Bangladesh is nowhere near what many other countries provide. He says that public support programmes are pretty small compared to the value of agricultural output.

According to the ministry of agriculture (MOA), subsidy to agriculture amounts to only 3.3 per cent of total farmgate value of agricultural products.

MOA sources told The Daily Star that Tk. 100 crore is provided as subsidy for fertiliser. Besides, considering the farmers interest the government spends crores of taka for price support on food procurement. Electricity rate for irrigation is also comparatively lower. The finance ministry is also ready to release more funds for subsidising fertiliser, if needed.

But, experts are not happy with these measures, they feel that MOA while preparing the budget for submission to the Finance Ministry, the should clearly mark subsidy and support within the World Trade Organization (WTO) framework.

Ramesh Sharma of Commodities and Trade Division of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) told a roundtable in the city last week for developing countries upper limit for subsidies is fixed at 10 per cent of the farmgate value of total agro-product.

In neighbouring India, which began pursuing the trade liberalization policies at the same time as Bangladesh, it still provides subsidies that are as high as 7.5 per cent of total farmgate value. There is absolutely no charge for electricity consumption in irrigation.

In Bangladesh there is no subsidy for export promotion of processed food. But, experts note that as the global market for processed food is growing at an encouraging rate of nine per cent annually, Bangladesh has tremendous potential to earn foreign exchange by exporting processed food.

Only recently, government has started thinking of providing 10 per cent cash incentive on export of agriculture products, both primary and processed.

Experts say that even before the 10 percent cash incentive, the government should re-examine its concessional imports of processed fruit and vegetable from Bhutan. Such concessional imports create incentives for other countries to channel their exports through

See Page 12 Col 7

Tofail promises quick steps towards billion-dollar software export

By Staff Correspondent

Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed yesterday said that the government would immediately take all necessary steps to implement a number of recommendations to develop the country's IT sector, identified as a thrust area, with a target of a billion dollar software export within a decade.

The Minister said at a seminar yesterday evening that he would pursue the Prime Minister to set up a high level committee along with the Finance Minister and the leaders in the IT sector in order to spearhead the sector's unhindered growth.

The government would soon announce a National IT Policy and pass the Intellectual Property Act that was now awaiting Cabinet's clearance, he told the seminar titled *Moving Forward with Information Technology* at the Institution of Engineers.

It was jointly organised by The Daily Star and APTECH.

Envisaging a scenario where the budding IT sector of the country would replace garment as the top export industry, Tofail Ahmed said, "We have lifted all duties and taxes on computers on January 4, 1998 as per those recommendations and are now in the process of implementing many of the suggestions made by Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury committee."

The seminar was also addressed by Prof. Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, Computer Samity President Aftabul Islam, Vice Chairman of Export Promotion Bureau Anwarul Bar Chowdhury, BGMEA vice president Annisul Haq, A Tawhid of BASIS, Mostafa Nurul Islam of Flora Ltd, Tarun Mitra and Rizwan Bin Faruq of APTECH. The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam moderated.

Referring to the BTTB-controlled poor and costly telecommunication system and high cost of Internet facilities, Tofail Ahmed said that he would do everything in his capacity to solve all the problems related to these.

"We know the new millennium would be IT based and we must go ahead with it," he said.

Prof Chowdhury said that though the government identified IT as a thrust sector, very little has been done to develop qualified IT experts to make the sector economically meaningful within a decade.

There were four institutes of technology in the country which aimed to produce 240 experts each year for which Tk 1 crore had been allocated. Prof Chowdhury said that such in

See Page 12 Col 2

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27 'unruly' sex workers 'freed' in two days

By Ehsanul Haque, back from Kashimpur

Authorities freed another 17 sex workers from the Kashimpur vagrants' home yesterday, raising the number to 27 in the last two days, as their attempt to motivate them to return to normal life failed.

Each sex worker, handed over to her 'guardian', was given a sewing machine and Tk 5,000.

All the sex workers kept in the two government vagrant's homes at Kashimpur and Pubail will be freed in phases, officials there said.

The Department of Social Services (DSS) had taken 267 sex workers to the two 'homes' from two brothels in Narayanganj on July 24 to rehabilitate them in normal life.

But the authorities had to start releasing the unruly sex workers in two days staged demonstrations, clashed with security personnel and threatened to kill themselves and the employees of the 'homes' unless they were freed, the officials said.

The authorities started freeing them three days before their deadline.

Director General of the DSS Mir Shahabuddin admitted that they failed to go by their rehabilitation plan. "Seven female counsellors were trying relentlessly to motivate the sex workers since they were brought to the vagrant homes on July 24. But they have failed to prepare them mentally for rehabilitation."

The sex workers continued their "rowdy protests" to free them, Shahabuddin told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We had to decide to hand over the sex workers, willing to go back home, to their guardians. We also offered them all possible assistance to help them become self-reliant," he said.

Dinu Babu murder
Oil distributors call strike in N dists today

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, July 31: Bangladesh Fuel Oil Distributors and Tank-Lorry Owners' Association has called a 12-hour strike in the northern region of the country tomorrow.

The strike was called to protest the killing of fuel oil dealer, Dinu Babu of Bogra.

All the filling stations in 16 northern districts will remain closed and the dealers will abstain from withdrawing oil from the depots.

The fuel oil distributors and tank-lorry owners today held a rally in the town demanding punishment to the killers.

See Page 12 Col 1

Khaleda says
Corridor in the name of transshipment

By Staff Correspondent

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia has said the government has given corridor facility to India in the name of transshipment by sacrificing national interest.

BNP would welcome any decision and proposal which would benefit the people and uphold national interest. "But it cannot accept the government's decision to provide corridor to India because it is completely against the country's interest."

Begum Zia said this when outgoing Canadian High Commissioner Nicholas Ethridge yesterday wanted to know her views on the government's recent decision to examine a proposal for allowing India to transship its goods through Bangladesh's land routes.

The High Commissioner paid a farewell call on Begum Zia at her official residence in the city. BNP's Advisory Council member MM Rezaul Karim briefed newsmen after the meeting that lasted more than an hour.

The Leader of the Opposition said that as in the past, the government wilfully took this 'anti-national' decision to provide corridor facility to India to implement Awami League's blueprint prepared before it came to power.

See Page 12 Col 3

Armed outsiders 'capture' two JU dormitories

SAVAR, July 31: Armed outsiders backed by an ousted BCL leader took control of two dormitories of Jahangirnagar University Friday night ousting their rivals, reports UNB.

Witnesses said about 50 outsider supporters of former BCL President Mohibullah captured Kamaluddin Hall and Shaheed Salam-Barkat (SSB) Hall at about 10 pm. They entered the campus firing gunshots. They also ransacked several rooms of the halls.

Four students were injured when the outsiders hit them with the handle of the firearms.

The first group led by Barkat captured Kamaluddin Hall and another group led by Nayeem and Miradul captured SSB Hall. They were previously expelled from the university for violating female students.

The ousted group, supporters of former BCL General Secretary Kakor, who is also an accused in the Ananda murder case, took control of the campus last September.

Meanwhile, protesting the incident, female students of the university brought out a procession under the banner of 'general student alliance' and laid

See Page 12 Col 5

Gunfight between BCL factions in Chittagong

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, July 31 : At least two persons received bullet injuries in a fresh gunfight between two rival factions of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) in Moghaltoli area near Agrabad Commerce College today, police said.

The injured were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

Police, however, arrested two activists during the clash that took place at around 1 pm as a sequel to previous rivalry between Nasir group and Kader group of BCL over control of Agrabad Commerce College campus.

Additional police were deployed on the college campus.

Series of clashes took place in and around Agrabad Commerce College between the two factions on Thursday leaving about 20 people injured, police and witnesses said.

Shrimp fry catchers depleting marine life in coastal areas

By Morshed Ali Khan, back from coastal districts

Authorities have failed to stop the plundering of the sea and the rivers by *bagda* (shrimp) fry catchers who are believed to be killing about 1,000 miniscule marine creatures for every shrimp fry they catch.

Thousands and thousands of people comb the seashores and the adjacent rivers along the coastal areas everyday using the finest hand-pulled nets available to catch the fries. The process traps all sorts of marine life into the net. After about an hour of pulling the net manually in waist-deep water, the catcher pulls the small net out of the water and pours the catch into a bowl filled with salty water.

He then meticulously scoops out the hair-like bagda fries. Sure that there is no more fry left in the bowl, he simply pours the remaining water onto the beach, completely unaware of the fact that thousands of other creatures, vital for an ecological balance, have been killed.

The extent of this plundering of the sea and adjacent rivers has reached such a proportion that environmentalists now wonder whether the recent scarcity of fish colonies in the sea and the rivers has something to do with this practice.

"The practice has been going on for several years now without any government initiative to stop it and the damage is already showing," said Ashgar Ali, a school teacher at Kalapara, under Patuakhali district. Ashgar blamed the fry catchers for depletion of various species of fishes in the sea. "There is no more fry

years ago.

People in the coastal areas of Patuakhali said if the authorities had taken little initiative the problem would have been solved long ago. They said thousands of poverty-stricken people of the coastal areas live on the bagda fry business. Therefore it could not be stopped.

What the authorities should do is ask the catchers to throw the water back into the sea after extracting the fries, they said. Each fry fetches the catcher between Tk.0.60 to 1.50 depending on the season. He sells the fries to buyers at the shore who, in turn, take the fries to shrimp growers across the region.

An initiative was taken last year in the Kuakata coast where about 10,000 people comb the seashore for *bagda* fries. The

See Page 12 Col 6

Two *Bagda* fry catchers at Hatia. — A K M Mohsin