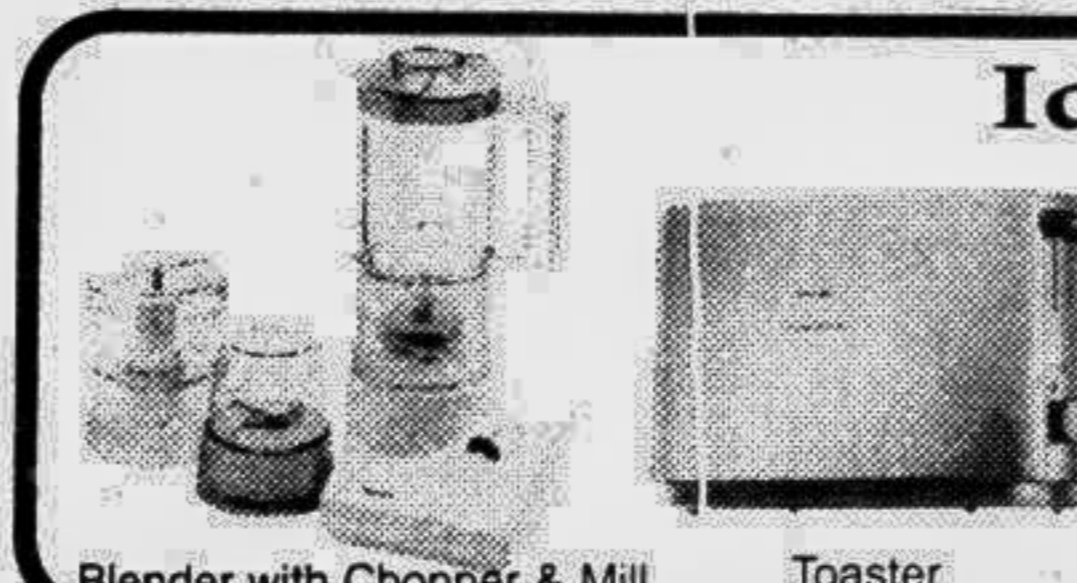




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Discovering Desh a half millenium after

By Staff Correspondent

The sailing boat, John Player Gold Leaf, on its 'Voyage of Discovery' through 70 countries in 170 days will have a grand reception when it ends its voyage at Chittagong port in November.

The British American Tobacco (BAT) officials yesterday said the voyage of one of the fastest sailing boats in history would end in style.

The consumers, retailers, distributors and the media alike will share the experience, said head of BAT's Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (CORA) Mahmudur Rahman at a press brief at a local hotel Wednesday.

Explaining the objective of the voyage whose costs have not been disclosed by the company, Rahman said in addition to promotional stunt, the Voyage of Discovery would experiment the challenges of ancient navigation through this maritime adventure.

However, unlike ancient vessels, the 80-foot long 'John Player Gold Leaf' is equipped with all modern navigational facilities including dual computers, underwater lighting, dual GPS, dual radar systems, the latest in radio communications, up to eight telephone lines and a live Beta satellite television link.

This means during any moment of the journey the sailing boat can send documentary pictures via satellite in just one minute to global television network.

To coincide with the occasion, a new-look Gold Leaf pack has already been released in the market.

"This is the biggest ever scheme undertaken by the John Player Gold Leaf and this is going to be one of the biggest events of the century when the boat arrives at Chittagong port," the official said, hinting at the grand reception at the end of the Voyage of Discovery by the six-man crew.

"John Player Gold Leaf" started its voyage on June 18 from London's Thames River.

Where is he?

By Gobinda Bar

Where is that rapist who allegedly violated 100 students on the campus of one of the highest seats of learning in the country?

Rumors run high that the rapist, Jashimuddin Manik, has packed off to Italy while many suspect that he has been absconding somewhere in the country.

The agitating students of Jahangirnagar University are too disgusted that the JU authorities filed cases against six rapists so late and that all of them including Manik are still at large.

Manik, who was general secretary of JU unit of the ruling party-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League, was expelled for life from the university in September last year following a probe body report. The probe body found him guilty of committing rapes on the campus in 1997 and 1998.

The Committee found 13 BCL leaders involved in incidents of rape. But the JU authorities punished only six of them, acquitting others for lack of sufficient evidence.

Cases have been filed now. See page 11 Col 8

Rising robbery rattles Rajshahi bankers

From Abdul Wadood

RAJSHAHI, Aug 11: Incidents of bank dacoity have increased in Rajshahi region, creating panic among bank officials.

Some of the banks have already taken special security measures and some others have written to higher authorities, sources said.

"Though most of the dacoity attempts were foiled, we are afraid of fresh bids in the wake of deteriorating law and order," said a high official of Sonali Bank here.

"We are alarmed because terrorists from the southern region of the country are now reportedly hiding in Rajshahi region following the recent government drive against them," he said.

On the night of July 21, some dacoits tried to break the locker of Janata Bank's Shitlai branch. Hearing noise, the night guard opened blank fire and cried for help. People nearby rushed to the spot and the dacoits fled away.

In the evening of January 28, dacoits tried to break a window of Rupali Bank, Rajshahi Cantonment branch in the city. People nearby started shouting and the dacoits fled away.

Local people foiled two other attempts for committing dacoity at Rajshahi Krishni Unnayan Bank branches at Tanore and Baya on December 24 and 12 respectively.

Dacoits broke open the door and took away valuable documents from Sonali Bank's Meerganj branch in the night of November 13. They fled away

when the night guard cried out for help.

Abdul Jabbar, night guard of Sonali Bank's Bagmara branch was killed by the dacoits when he tried to resist them on the night of October 13 last year.

The bank authorities filed cases in connection with the incidents. But police could not arrest any of the dacoits, authorities of the banks said.

But sources in the metropolitan and the district police said the cases could not be processed due to lack of witnesses

and cooperation from the bank authorities and local people.

"We, however, ordered the thanas to keep close vigilance on security of banks through their patrol teams," said a high official of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police.

Meanwhile, authorities of most of the banks have beefed up security at branches. High officials of Prime Bank, National Bank, Islami Bank, Al-Baraka Bank, IFIC Bank and Eastern Bank said they have strengthened security at

branches by deploying more than one guard.

But nationalised banks have not yet done anything to tighten security. "There is only one sanctioned post of guard for one branch, increasing the number requires administrative decision at the top level," said a high official of Sonali Bank.

The regional office of Sonali Bank has sent letters to its head office requesting for more than one guard in a branch. But there is no response yet, the official said.



Waning wildlife

By Shehab Ahmed

The Sarus Crane and Bengal Florican have been listed as extinct among the birds while the status of King Vulture and magnificent Pallas' Eagle are being debated whether they have disappeared from Bangladesh by wild life experts who have just compiled the country's first red data book of endangered species.

The book which will be available from September and October in English and Bangla with versions for school children, by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Bangladesh lists 890 living species and 13 species that disappeared.

The book classifies the status of 259 fish, 22 amphibians, 108 reptiles, 391 birds, 110 mammals out of the total 890 living species.

Also in focus are the 64 species listed Critically Endangered (CE), 86 Endangered (EN) and 50 Vulnerable (VU), bringing total of threatened species to 200. There are inadequate or Data Deficient (DD) species of 342 and Not Threatened (NO) of 348. IUCN wild life expert Anisuzzaman Khan said.

While the Royal Bengal Tiger, Gharial and Elephants are listed as CE, thirteen varieties of wild life had disappeared during the last century. These are One-horned Rhinoceros, Javan Rhinoceros, Asiatic two-horned Rhinoceros, Gaur, Banteng, Wild Buffalo, Nilgai, Sawamp Deer, Hog Deer, Wolf, Pink-headed Duck, Common Peafowl and Marsh Crocodile.

The review of the status of the vertebrate fauna reveals that 55 inland fish, 8 amphibians, 58 inland reptiles, 40 resident birds and 40 inland mammals have come under different categories of threat, Khan said.

See page 11 Col 6

Unnecessary wait for Tk 10 crore drug plant

Facility wasted as costly import of life saving anti-toxin serum continues

By Naimul Haq

Despite its successful trial run in 1996, the only state-owned plant in the country for producing anti-toxin serum (life saving anti-poison drug) could not go into production.

Many of its staff are not getting salary for over 10 months while funds for maintenance of the plant are almost exhausted. Its costly machinery is being damaged due to lack of use.

The state-of-the-art factory under the Institute of Public Health (IPH) in the city was set up with World Bank assistance of about Tk 10 crore as a development project, completed in 1995. The World Health Organisation provided technical expertise for training, machinery procurement and other requirements.

The plant went into 'laboratory scale trial production' in 1996 and produced about 100 vials of anti-snake venom sera, ASVS (drug that instantly neutralises action of snake poison).

An estimated 10,000 incidents of snakebite take place in the country annually. Many of them die due to lack of drugs, treatment facilities or late diagnosis.

"Despite its capacity to produce ASVS on large scale (25,000 vials yearly) and potential to produce three other anti-toxins like anti-diphtheria, anti-rabies and anti-tetanus, it could not go into production," a high official of the plant told

this correspondent.

"We feel very sorry that a large amount of public money is spent every year to import these drugs while we are virtually sitting idle," said another official.

According to a source at the Central Medical Store Depot (CMSD), the government spends over Tk 1.2 crore every year to import ASVS and those are supplied to hospitals across the country.

"Anti-toxin (ASVS) produced in the IPH plant would cost almost half the price of imported ones, he said. "For example, each 10 ml vial of ASVS would cost a little over Tk 500 if produced in the plant while imported ASVS of similar quality

and measure costs about Tk 1000."

IPH officials pointed out that when completed, the plant was supposed to be brought under the government's revenue budget without any interruption.

The 'change' from development budget to revenue budget is taking such a long time though the health ministry is well aware of importance of the plant," said a high official.

"Officials of establishment, finance, health and other relevant ministries met in the past in this regard but there seems to have been no progress," he added.

During a visit to the plant, officials showed this corre-

spondent laboratory scale production of ASVS.

"Although the plant occasionally goes on trial runs, but if the operation is not regular, some of the vital machinery may suffer damage," said a pharmaceutical expert.

Due to shortage of funds, many of the staff at the plant are not getting salaries for over 10 months, its proper maintenance is being hampered and even procurement of adequate fodder for horses is not possible, an official pointed out.

Horses are used in such plants as laboratory guinea pigs. Snake venom (venom of cobra, krait, russel and echis) are pushed into bodies of horses from low doses to high doses to immunise them.

There is no reason why we should depend on import of these curative life saving drugs while we are able to produce those at the plant," said a frustrated official.

Ctg-Cox's Bazar road link snapped

20 unions flooded

COXS BAZAR, Aug 12: A portion of Chittagong-Cox's Bazar road near Cheringa under Chakaria thana was washed away by flood waters this morning, snapping direct road link between the two districts.

Thana Nirbahi Officer of Chakaria told BSS over telephone that the Matamuhuri river was flowing five feet above the danger level and at least 21 unions of Chakaria have been submerged by flood water.

He said at least one lakh people of eight unions of the thana were affected by flood. Chakaria Poursava Administrator Advocate Amjad Hossain said over 100 houses were de-

voured by the Matamuhuri as erosion continues along its two banks from Manikpur to Koyier Beel.

More than 50 schools and colleges have also gone under chest-deep water in the flood affected areas.

Flood waters have also inundated Cheringa-Badarkhali, Banachara-Magnama and Sikalgatha-Manikpur roads.

The worst affected unions are Kakara, Baraitali, Lakhyachar, Harbang, Fashia Khali, Cheringa, Bheola Manikchar and Bara Bheola.

Local administration has made arrangements to rescue the affected people.

CU closed sine die

CHITTAGONG, Aug 12: Chittagong University was closed sine die after a fierce gunfight between two factions of ruling party's student wing left over 50 wounded, including four policemen hit by bullets, reports UNB.

An emergency meeting of the CU Syndicate at night took the decision with VC Prof Abdul Mannan in the chair, varsity officials said.

Residents were asked to vacate their dormitories by 10 am tomorrow (Friday).

All activities relating to honours first-year admission test, however, will continue as usual.

(Earlier story on Page 11)

Rivers swell after heavy rains

By Special Correspondent

At least two rivers have swelled above their danger levels and the major river systems are rising following heavy rains in different parts of the country during the past 36 hours ending at 6 pm yesterday, the Met Office and Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) said.

The Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna systems are rising along with the south-eastern basin rivers due to heavy monsoon rains, FFWC said. The river Sarma at Kanaghat and the Matamuhuri at Lama are flowing above danger level. Out of 46 monitoring stations on

Matrimonial meanness

Hundred guests refused permission to attend opposition leader's daughter's wedding

By Staff Correspondent

The Cantonment authorities yesterday did not allow some 123 guests, majority of them politicians and MPs, to attend the wedding ceremony of Shaila Chowdhury, youngest daughter of Deputy Leader of the Opposition Prof AQM Badruozza Chowdhury, at Shenakunja inside the Dhaka Cantonment.

Party and family sources said the authorities sent a letter to Chowdhury's house at about 2 pm yesterday, which refused to give security clearance to the 123 restricted guests to enter the cantonment area.

They said the authorities did not mention any specific reason why the guests were not allowed to attend the marriage reception. The authority in its letter just informed all other guests excepting the listed (123) guests that they are not permitted to attend the ceremony.

When contacted at 8:30 pm, director of ISPR Muhammad Hussain after two hours said that the Army Headquarters has confirmed the incident but could not give the exact number of guests refused entry.

A BNP leader said Prof Chowdhury tried to contact the Army Chief and other

concerned officers to solve the problem, but could not reach them.

Family sources said after finding no other way Chowdhury expressed his profound regret to his guests for the inconvenience over telephone to as many as was possible.

The 123 guests include: BNP Standing Committee member Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed, vice chairman Tariqul Islam and Shahjahan Siraj, BNP MPs Barrister Nazmul Huda, Jamiruddin Sircar, MK Anwar, M Shamsul Islam, Sadek Hossain Khoka, Shamsul Islam Khan, Amanullah Aman, Ehsanul Haq Milton, Ziaul Haq Zia and party leaders Major General (Retd) ZA Khan, Major (Retd) Shahjahan Omar, BU, Anwar Zahid and Enran Saleh Prince, Awami League MP Bangabir Kader Siddique, Jatya Party MPs Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Rusham Ali Farazi and Mofazzel Hossain Kaikobad, Jamaat leaders Abbas Ali Khan, Matiur Rahman Nizami and Delwar Hossain Saidee MP.

About 1000 guests were invited to the ceremony which was attended among others by Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia.

Tax defaulters reign in Narayanganj

From Ehsanul Haque

NARAYANGANJ, Aug 12: More than three-fourths of the targeted municipal tax remained unrealised in the last fiscal, forcing the Narayanganj Municipality to shelve many of its development plans.

The outstanding money for 1998-99 financial year is as much as Tk 3.32 crore, out of an assessed Tk 4.21 crore. The money has been defaulted by both private and public sectors, officials said.

Only Tk 89.09 lakh, about 21 per cent of the total assessment, came to the municipal coffers. The officials said they are planning legal proceedings against the defaulters.

Collection was slightly bet-

ter the previous year (1997-98). It was Tk 1.32 crore, about 28 per cent, against an estimated demand of Tk 3.98 crore. The outstanding money has now accumulated to Tk 2.84 crore, according to officials.

Different government, semi-government and autonomous bodies owe about Tk 92.57 lakh to the municipality while private sector is yet to pay about Tk 2.39 crore. The number of holdings of the municipality roughly stands at 9,570.

The big defaulters are Kumdini Welfare Trust, with an outstanding amount of Tk 37.23 lakh, different private jute companies with about Tk 20

See page 11 Col 8

Downing of Pak plane won't affect peace agenda: India

NEW DELHI, Aug 12: India said today that its downing of a Pakistani patrol plane was an isolated incident, and it still wanted peace talks with its neighbour, reports Reuters.

"It's an isolated specific military action, it does not impinge on our overall approach to have a dialogue," foreign ministry spokesman Kaminder Singh Jassal told journalists. "We want a dialogue with Pakistan. Our position remains un-

changed ... but these kind of provocations are not conducive."

Tensions between India and Pakistan intensified on Tuesday when India shot down a Pakistani patrol aircraft, saying it had intruded into Indian airspace. Islamabad said the plane was shot down inside Pakistani territory and all 16 people on board were killed. The foreign ministry spokesman said the Indian Air Force

had acted in line with standard operating procedures after the Pakistani reconnaissance aircraft flew 10 km (6.25 miles) into Indian air space over the western state of Gujarat. "No country tolerates intrusion into airspace by military aircraft," he said.

The Pakistani aircraft was given enough opportunity to land or make clear its intentions, but it did neither. "It ignored all signals and had to be engaged," he said.

Advertisement for Maggi featuring a family eating together. Text includes 'নিমেষেই স্যুপ' and 'সত্যি মাপীর তুলনা নেই'.

Hearing of writ challenging SPA adjourned till Oct 26

The hearing of the writ petition challenging legality of the Special Powers Act, 1974 adjourned till Oct 26, reports BSS.

The matter came up in the daily hearing list of a High Court Division Bench comprising Justice Mohammad Fazul Karim and Justice Mohammad Ali Azgar Khan on the prayer of the petitioner Advocate Omar Sadat.

Advocate Omar Sadat as petitioner filed the writ petition challenging the legality of the some sections of the Special Powers Act, 1974.

Landslide kills 4 in Bandarban

BANDARBAN, Aug 12: At least four people, including two women, were killed and 50 others injured, nine of them critically, in landslides in three villages of Aiznagar under Lama Thana of the district last night, reports BSS.

About 50 mud houses were damaged when earth from a one km area of a hill fell 250 feet down on Muslimpara, Seurtalpara and Kalljeerpara due to incessant rain. People recovered four bodies from the debris

Of the injured, five were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital

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