

Another 17 fall in Dhaka-Aricha death trap

SAVAR, Sept 2: At least 17 people were killed and over 50 injured as two buses collided on the Dhaka-Aricha highway here today, reports UNB.

Among the dead were a government officer and the driver and helper of one of the buses that overturned after the collision, police and witnesses said.

Of the dead, eight were identified as Mohammad Ali, 50, of Damadda in Shariatpur, auditor of the Public Works Department Rezaul Islam Khan, 45, of Manikganj, bus helper Solim Hossain, 35, of Nimertek, Savar, Abdur Rahman, 50, of Daulatpur in Manikganj, Kamruzzaman, 20, of Dhaka, Augustine Koraiya, 35, of Razashan, Savar, Khandkar Rezaul Karim, 40, Unit Manager of Idris Agency of ALICO, and driver of Nabinbaran,

Pran Ballav Rajbangshi, 50, of Courtbari, Mirpur.

Police said the accident occurred at Genda in Savar thana at about 11:30 am when a Dhaka-bound bus of Nabinbaran collided with another bus of Jatrisaba transport lines.

Eight of the victims died on the spot, six succumbed to their injuries at Savar Thana Health Complex, two in Dwp Clinic and one on way to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The bodies were sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Ten of the injured — Chan Mia, 40, Jinal Abedin, 40, Al Mamun, 20, Kamol, 40, Halima Yasmin, 30, Jewel, 22, Titu, 23, Mohammad Ali, 45, Jewel, 30, Poly, 6, and Rezeka, 50, — were admitted to local thana health

complex. The critically injured Rahima Khatun, 35, Azharul, 45, Mazeda, 25, two unidentified men, Rahim Ali, 40, Khorshed Munshi 35, Nurul Huq, 25, Abdul Hye, 25, and Rokeya, 50, were rushed to the DMCH.

The DC and SP of Dhaka and local MP visited the spot. A case was filed with Savar police.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock at the loss of 17 lives in the road accident.

In a condolence message, Hasina prayed for salvation of the departed souls and early recovery of the injured undergoing treatment at different hospitals and clinics.

She also conveyed her sympathy to the members of the bereaved families.

Save the Sundarbans

By Morshed Ali Khan

Saving the ecology of the Sundarbans has become a concern with the phenomenal growth of tourism in the forest. According to a rough estimate by tour operators the number of visitors has increased ten fold in the last eight years.

The concern by the environmentalists and tour operators is heightened further with the arrival of the tourist season that starts in October and continues till end of March.

Leading tour operators said the Department of Forest issues permission to hundreds of groups to visit the Sundarbans every year. Most of these groups hire motor launches on their own and go into the forest without proper logistics.

They go to Katka, Kachikhal and other places in hundreds, without suitable logistics and descend on the forest with loudspeakers and picnic materials. This must be stopped," said Hasan Mansur of Guide Tours Ltd. He suggested the groups have food and accommodation arrangements in the vessels they travel in.

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Marauding tourists threaten the world's largest mangrove forest



Shattered silence Inquisitive but boisterous tourists have become a potent threat to the spotted deer in the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest. — Photo: Enam Ul Haque

Anti-corruption agenda defined

Top leaders suggest remedies to the pervasive disease

In the face of a strong plea for a change in political culture as a prerequisite for a corruption-free society, former minister Saifur Rahman went in defence of politicians as he suggested making civil bureaucrats answerable, reports UNB.

"You all blame politicians... Civil servants who are behind every transaction never take any responsibility for their wrongdoing," Saifur told a seminar on "Corruption in Public Administration" in the city yesterday.

Transparency International-Bangladesh organised the seminar at the Centre of Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDA)

auditorium. Food and Agriculture Minister Motia Chowdhury, Public Administration Reforms Commission Chairman Prof ATM Shamsul Haque, BNP lawmakers M R Anwar and Khalequzzaman, Chief Justice Mostafa Kamal, eminent lawyer Dr Kamal Hossain, and National Board of Revenue Chairman Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury were among the speakers.

The seminar hammered out a common view that appalling corruption in administration could be controlled by strengthening watchdog agencies, like Public Accounts Committee, Office of the Auditor General,

Bureau of Anti-corruption. Parliamentary standing committees can also effectively guard against administrative corruption, it said.

It felt the need for appointment of an Ombudsman as per provision of the constitution.

Speakers also talked about erosion in values and called for reshuffling the education system. Saifur Rahman, a BNP lawmaker and former finance minister, said every file gets signed by at least seven secretaries before it lands at the ECNEC for approval. But only politicians are made scapegoats when any case is filed regarding any transaction, he regretted.

He, however, felt political culture needs to be changed and watchdog agencies strengthened to have a better administration. Good governance and devolution of power, along with effective watchdog agencies, are essential for transparent and accountable government, he viewed.

Agriculture Minister Motia Chowdhury mentioned government step to make parliamentary standing committees more transparent and accountable saying that the relevant ministers no longer chair the committees.

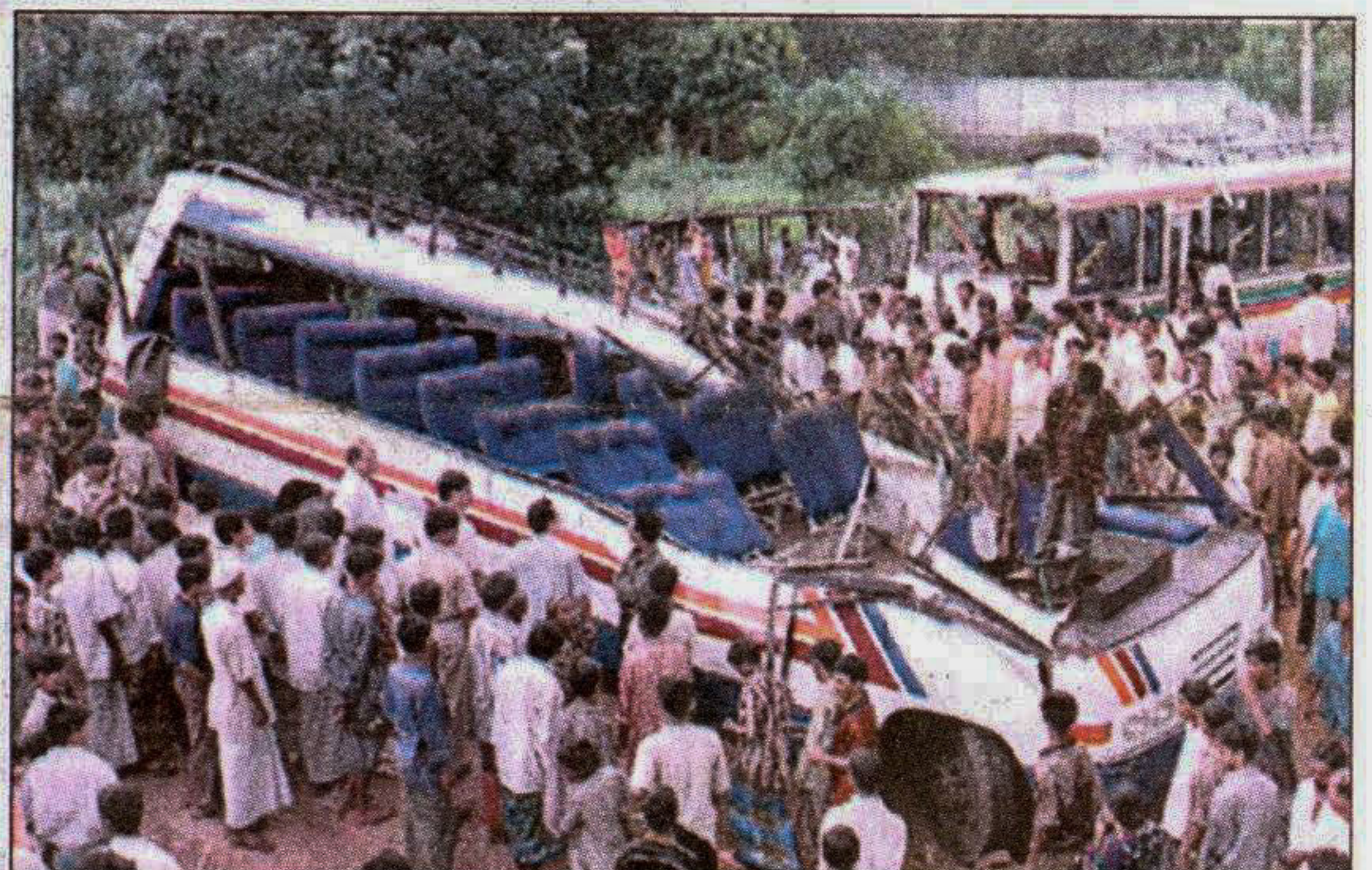
Corruption is a very old practice, but today it reached such a height that "we have to

bounce back for our future." Corruption prevails in every sphere of society, Matia said. The minister said frequent martial law paved the way for wholesale corruption in the administration.

Public Administration Reforms Commission (PARC) chairman ATM Shamsul Haque said reforms were imperative for freeing the administration from corruption.

Chief Justice Mostafa Kamal said, "Corruption can't be fought at all if state fosters, nurtures corruption."

He recommended an education system with strong religious bias, saying, "Ethos that



Destination death Witnesses of sadly familiar tale through one of the hapless vehicles in a ditch at Ganda, five kilometres away from Savar. — AFP photo

Asian lawmakers talk ways towards peace

By Staff Correspondent

Lawmakers and civil society representatives from different Asian countries attending a conference in the city discussed yesterday various impediments to peace in the region and suggested ways to achieve it through mutual cooperation.

The participants, split into four working groups, discussed five key-note papers presented by Bangladesh lawmakers.

The four-day conference began on Wednesday. Those who took part in the discussions included Prince Norodom Ranariddh from Cambodia, Chakma Chief from Bangladesh Raja Devashish Roy, Senior researcher at Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Ravinder Pal Sing, former chief justice of India's Himachal Pradesh Justice Leila Seth, programme executive of South Asian Forum of Human Rights in Nepal Tita Manchanda, peace activist Rajmohan Gandhi, Dr. Ahmad Abbas from Jordan and Taysir Quba from Palestine.

Awami League MP and Chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on finance ministry Ali Ashraf presented a paper on Disarmament and Human Security: Asian Perspective. In his paper, Ali Ashraf said, "All the people of the world want peace and security", while "removal of arms or disarmament can make the world safe, secure and peaceful". He said, "Parliamentarians, as peoples representatives, can be the most effective antidote for the malice called war. Parliamentarians must be the first-line of defence for protection of peace". The ruling party lawmaker suggested that a Charter of Peace be adopted. The salient features of the proposed charter include:

1. Making endeavour to incorporate provision into the constitutions of the states concerned under which the authority of declaring war would be lying with parliaments. Besides, the process of declaring war should be made difficult and subject to extreme scrutiny, judgement and prudence, while

such a decision should not be based on simple parliamentary majority.

2. Making efforts to enact law in the national parliaments of the states concerned, curbing all forms of military expenditure.

3. Making attempts to freeze growth in military expenditure and downsize military budgets.

4. Moving and supporting bills in parliaments consistently to re-allocate resources for human resource development and programmes for sustainable development.

Passage of stricter legislation on possession and use of small arms.

Promoting joint parliamentary bodies, with legislators from the bordering constituencies of the countries concerned to ensure good neighbourliness and defuse tension in border areas.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Abdul Malin Khashru presented a paper on International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law

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UCBL battle spills on to Ctg streets

From Our Correspondent CHITTAGONG, Sept 2: At least fifteen people were injured, three with bullet, when two rival groups of Awami League activists belonging to Akhteruzzaman Babu and Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury (UCBL Chairman) clashed at Chatori Bazar in Anwara thana today.

Of the injured, Md Morshed, 24, Kalu, 25, and Md. Enam were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital with critical bullet injury, police and hospital sources said.

The trouble broke out centring a reception at Chittagong north district AL to AZM Nasir at Laldighi Maidan in the city yesterday. Nasir is a supporter of Zafar.

It was alleged that some activists of Babu group who were angered by yesterday's reception to Nasir, attack some activists of Nasir-Zafar group at the bazar at about 12:45 pm today. Activists of Babu group then attacked a business establishment of one Md Morshed of Nasir-Zafar group ransacking and damaging property.

Following the attack, the two groups were locked in a 'clash, also trading gunshots. Protesting the clash, businessmen of Chatori Bazar brought out a procession and put up barricade on the Chittagong-Cox's Bazar road at the bazar.

The barricade was removed at about 5 pm.

Air-quality project chokes

Imported lead-free gasoline to get lead again!



Sinister smoke Pollutant-spewing city buses continue to make mockery of the much-publicised campaign for clean air in the capital. — Star photos; A K M Mohsin

Babu owes UCBL Tk 220 cr

By Staff Correspondent

The United Commercial Bank Ltd (UCBL) has about Tk 220 crore loans lying with its former chairman Akhteruzzaman Chowdhury Babu. Most of the loans have already become defaulted.

The loans were taken against various fictitious accounts. The companies are owned by Babu, his relatives and some of his employees.

Till December 1998, Babu alone had over Tk 96.79 crore loans from the bank, which currently stand at Tk 220 crore including interest.

Falling to recover the amount, UCBL on December 30, 1998 sought the central bank's directives.

The Bangladesh Bank on January 11, 1999 suggested UCBL to sue Babu, his wife Nurunnesa Zaman and his father-

in-law Sirajul Islam Chowdhury in the bankruptcy court.

UCBL then initiated a move to file a case with the bankruptcy court. But Babu stayed the process by filing a writ with the High Court. The HC later vacated the stay, prompting Babu to appeal to the Supreme Court. The bank is now awaiting disposal of the case before going to the bankruptcy court.

Babu is an accused in the sensational Humayun Zahir murder case. Zahir had replaced Babu as chairman of UCBL.

The central bank removed Babu from the post of the chairman in 1992 on charge of acting against the interest of the bank and its depositors. His father-in-law Sirajul Islam Chowdhury was also removed from the board.

A few months back, Babu wrote to the central bank that he was removed from UCBL for three years and expressed his desire to return to the board as penalty period had expired.

Following this, Bangladesh Bank asked UCBL to send a status report on Babu's loan portfolio, which the bank duly did.

According to sources, UCBL told BB that the lion's share of its classified loans was proven to have been obtained by Babu, his family members, relatives and employees.

Two companies-- Modern Fabrics Ltd and Sea Line Monofishing Net Industries-- owes Tk 10.80 lakh and Tk 10.51 crore respectively to the bank and these are all reportedly owned by Babu's close relatives.

Messrs Karnaphuli Cotton

By Shehab Ahmed The World Bank-financed five million dollar Air Quality Management Project (AQMP) for Dhaka city and other urban centres is yet to take off.

The Department of Environment (DoE) is preparing the project proposal under the WB guidelines to improve the air quality in the major cities in three years after launching this year.

But due to shortage of manpower and poor cooperation from other departments, the DoE found it difficult to complete all necessary paperwork to get it cleared by the ECNEC.

DoE sources said they are on the final stage of completing the paper work. It is going to be placed before the ECNEC headed by the prime minister sometime this month, they added.

The project aims at taking up a number of measures to clean the urban air of pollutants due to vehicle exhausts like lead and sulphur.

Surveys undertaken by the DoE, Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission and Dhaka Shishu Hospital have showed

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BTTB's cellular plan torpedoed

Planners oppose financing 50,000-phone project from public purse

By Mustak Hossain

The Ministry of Planning has said 'no' to a project proposal from Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) for providing 50,000 cellular phone connections to consumers, a highly placed source in the ministry said.

The proposal was submitted earlier for approval of the ministry. The government is reluctant to finance such projects from the public exchequer, the source noted. "Private cellular phone

providers are doing better in the field and the government is likely to keep cellular phone in private sector."

BTTB had a plan to introduce 50,000 mobile phones at an estimated cost of about Tk 114 crore. Donors' contribution of Tk 91 crore was expected for the project. But, the source said, there was 'less response' from the donors.

There are about 75,000 cellular phone users in the country.

and four private companies are providing the service.

"The cellular phone project would ease pressure on private mobile phone providers and break the monopoly of private sector," a BTTB official said.

About 110,000 applications for telephone connections in the city are pending and the number will greatly increase once connections are given, he added.

"BTTB is very much aware of

this fact but cannot undertake the expansion work to the extent necessary due to poor allocations of development funds from the government," the official said seeking anonymity.

The BTTB provides infrastructure facility to all the four cellular phone providers.

At present, telephone service in Dhaka and some other places of the country are being expanded under two development projects.