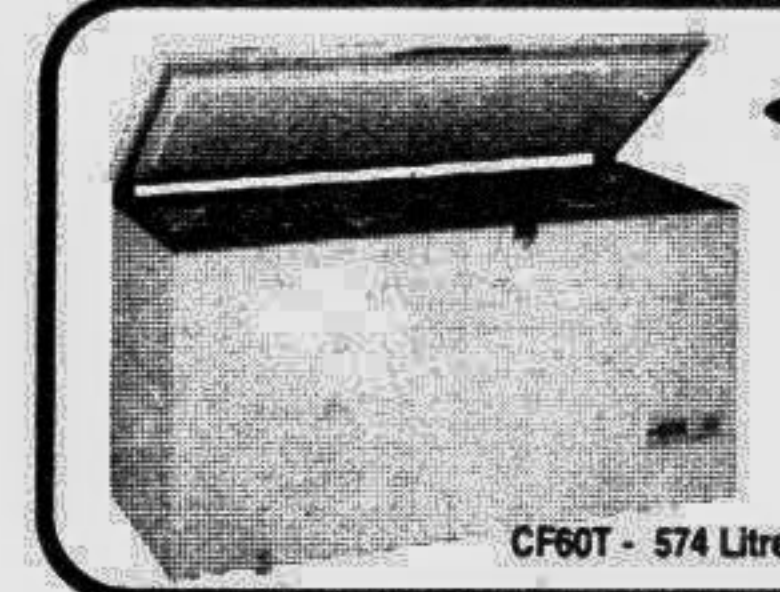


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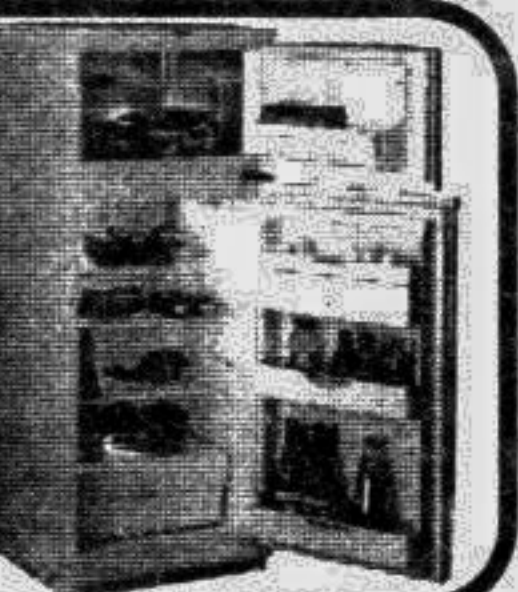
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Down to Earth

A look at rickshawpullers' life

By A S M Nurunnabi

The teeming rickshaws are mainly blamed for the anarchic traffic situation in Dhaka city. Rickshaws are Dhaka's speciality. But the way they are fast proliferating, in most cases without proper licence, they are becoming a cause for our horrible nightmare.

According to an unofficial estimate, their number in the city exceeds more than five lakh, nearly four times the licensed ones. Although the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) reportedly stopped issuing new licences long ago, more and more rickshaws hit the city streets like locusts through spurious means. And the sheer burden of their overwhelming numbers chokes the city roads.

Yet the stark reality is that in the context of our socio-economic milieu, these huge numbers of rickshaws provide equally numerous jobs for the support of an equally large number of families.

A 'sample survey' of the rickshawpullers recently provided glimpses of the life of the city's rickshawpullers.

A brief description of the results of the survey bearing on some of the basic aspects of their life is given below.

Obviously, the city rickshawpullers constitute a substantial part of urban labour force. The survey reveals that a higher percentage of the rickshawpullers belongs to the age group between 20 and 35 years. A smaller percentage, even of the age group 45 to 55, or 60 are also found engaged in this profession because mainly in such families the adult sons are in different to their parents. A major percentage of members of their families are found to be illiterate and not engaged in any occupation.

An important fact that has emerged from the survey is that a large proportion of the rickshawpullers has no licence. The hassles in obtaining licence, which was stopped long ago, have spawned a new phenomenon: a good number of fake licences bearing the same number and formats as those of genuine ones are available, a corruption commonly practised with the help of evil social elements.

Although a large proportion of them were previously in other occupations including agriculture, the main motive for their taking to rickshaw-pulling is stated to be its higher income from it. They survey has indicated, however, that a good number of those who have opted for this profession are not happy with their new occupation in spite of the comparatively higher income because it involves strenuous labour. On this account, some of them take to other jobs as part-time occupations like hawking of various articles on footpaths.

In most cases, the rickshawpullers do not own the vehicles. In such cases, they ply vehicles owned by others on fixed payments mostly on half-day shifts. A major proportion of them live in *kutcha* houses and city slums.

A majority of them frequently falls victims of physical ailments and is subject to harassment by law-enforcing agencies. A substantial portion of them state that they receive support from the owners of their vehicles in case of financial difficulties. A good number of them cherish the dream of having their own vehicles in future.

On the basis of the data obtained during the survey, some pertinent observations were made which include the following:

(i) Though most of the rickshawpullers are found to earn comparatively higher income, they are not satisfied with the calling because it involves hard labour. Moreover, whatever be their earning from it, it is hardly sufficient to enable them to live with their families free from hardship in these days of rising prices. Besides, there is also no guarantee for a stable income from this occupation. By and large, the city rickshawpullers have a precarious financial existence. In this context, a story was told by a rickshaw passenger who was riding a rickshaw whose operator was wearing a shirt which was in such a tattered condition that most part of his back was bare. That spectacle struck a cord of

sympathy in the passenger's heart. On reaching his destination, the passenger offered him a hundred-taka note although the normal fare was Tk 20. The rickshawpuller said he had no change. After having seen the tattered condition of the shirt of the rickshawpuller, the passenger ungrudgingly said that he could keep the whole amount as his fare.

The point in telling the story is that if we can take a compassionate view of a rickshawpuller's shaky financial existence as a whole without going into unnecessary haggling over fares and pay up without questioning the agreed fare, this may encourage taking a humane view of the financial straits that a rickshawpuller normally goes through as part of his life.

(ii) In order to enable them to earn some additional income after their daily fixed shifts, some scope may be created at public and private levels for them to get vocational training in such fields as cottage industries, TV and radio sets repairing and other associated fields.

(iii) Forcible clearance of slums by authorities in most cases brings great suffering to many rickshawpullers who live with their families in slum areas. For their rehabilitation it is imperative that their housing conditions be improved. For this purpose, low-cost housing schemes on easy loans with low rates of interest may be a great help for them.

(iv) In order to ensure their protection from harassment and unfair demands from owners and other quarters, there is need for their greater organisation through co-operative societies or unions which may look after their interests not only in the short run but also in the long run when rickshaws will be abolished in the city, with suitable schemes providing them with training, guidance and financial support for their changing over to other more stable professions like operating mechanised vehicles or working as skilled workers in mills, factories or other enterprises, particularly driving 'baby taxis'.

Gano Forum's 'human chain'

By Staff Correspondent

The Gano Forum will organise a 'human chain' today when it will Monday to protest eviction of slum dwellers without rehabilitation.

The human chain beginning at 10 am will cover Zero point, National Press Club, Shahbagh Crossing, Hotel Sonargaon, Farm gate, Old Airport, Mahakhali and Banani. The programme will end at 11:00 a.m.

Gano Forum general secretary Saifuddin Ahmed Manik at a meeting at Anaroli Math at Mahakhali yesterday criticised the government for evicting slum dwellers without arranging their rehabilitation.

He termed the government drive 'a move against fundamental and constitutional rights of the country's citizens'.

He called upon the government to initiate rehabilitation programme to provide habitat for the evicted slum dwellers.

3 hurt in N'ganj trawler capsized

NARAYANGANJ, Sept 10: Three passengers of a trawler were injured today when the capsized in the Sitalakha river after being rammed by an oil tanker near Tanbazar area, reports BSS.

Police said they seized the Siddhirganj-bound oil tanker and arrested its Master, Fazlul Haque, in this connection.

The trawler, which was carrying sand, capsized at about 10 am.

The injured persons were admitted to a local clinic. A case was registered with Narayanjanj thana in this connection.

Two killed by lightning in Pirojpur

PIROJPUR, Sept 10: Two people were killed by lightning at village Sonakura in Kaukhali thana this morning, reports UNB.

The dead were identified as Abdur Rahman Hawladar, 35, and his nephew Noor Mohammad, 20.

Villagers said the incident occurred while they were working in the field. Two cows were also killed by the lightning.

17 hurt as BCL factions clash in Sirajganj

From Our Correspondent
 SIRAJGANJ, Sept 10: At least 17 people were injured, three of them seriously, in a clash between two factions of BCL at Tarash thana headquarters this morning.

The clash was sequel to yesterday's clash between the two factions — one led by BCL leader and Tarash Degree College V.P. Abdus Salam and the other by BCL leader, Jewel.

Both the groups used lethal weapons and exploded crackers during the clash.

Muggers

From page 1

juror constable Rezaul and Ansar Manik. They were admitted to Rajbargh police hospital.

Babul later told police that his accomplices who managed to escape were Shorab, Monir and autorickshaw driver Iqbal.

Attack on Kurigram DSA office: SI closed

From Our Correspondent
 KURIGRAM, Sept 10: A tense situation is prevailing in the town following attack and ransacking of District Sports Association (DSA) office here yesterday.

One sub-inspector of police was closed to police lines yesterday for negligence of duty during the incident.

A group of ruling party activists yesterday brought out a procession in the town demanding cancellation of election to DSA executive committee for what they said enlistment of 'false voters' through some thana committees of DSA.

At one stage, the processionists attacked the DSA office and damaged furniture.

They also assaulted some DSA officials in presence of SI T Azad Chowdhury.

Soon after the incident, ADC (General) and police superintendent visited the spot and talked to DSA officials and journalists. Later, SP closed SI Azad to police lines.

A case was filed with sadar thana in this connection. Earlier on September 7, district AD president Nazir Hossain at a press conference at his residence alleged enlistment of 'false voters' in the voter list. He demanded cancellation of election to DSA executive body.

Pakistan was once the largest buyer of Bangladesh tea. Once Pakistan used to buy up to 18 million kgs per year though it came down to 5 million kgs last year. So the visit is quite important for us," Chowdhury said.

Other officials said a decision has been taken to hold tea

Traveller's cheques, Bangladesh currency worth Tk 88 lakh seized at Zia

Traveller's cheques and Bangladesh currency worth Tk 88 lakh were seized at the Zia International Airport yesterday, reports UNB.

The customs surveillance team found a gunny bag lying on the passengers' holding lounge while security check of a Gulf Air flight was in progress at about 8:15 am.

As none did claim ownership of the bag, authorities concerned opened it and found one lakh US dollar worth of TCs and Bangladesh Tk 38 lakh, said a customs official.

A departmental case was filed.

BNP jt meeting today

A joint meeting of BNP and its front organisations will be held at the party central office in the city at 11 am today, reports UNB.

Two agri colleges

From page 1

eral secretary of Bangladesh Krishi Bid Institution, viewed that all three agricultural colleges should be upgraded to agricultural universities in view of the agri-sector's importance in Bangladesh economy now and in the future. "In addition, there should be two more agricultural universities in the country — one in Khulna and another in Chittagong-Sylhet region," said Ali, a former principal of Haji Danesh Agriculture College.

Some imminent persons from Dinajpur also expressed their surprise and frustration at the government decision. Talking to this correspondent, Faruk Danesh, son late Haji Danesh, said it has dashed the hopes and aspirations of the people of northern districts who have long been demanding that the college be upgraded to an agricultural university.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told a public meeting at Dinajpur early last year that there would be a science and technology university in the district and the Haji Danesh College would also be upgraded.

There are only three agricultural colleges in the country. These are Haji Danesh Agriculture College at Dinajpur, Patuakhali Agriculture College and the Bangladesh Agricultural Institute in the city.

The government last year

Nasim

From page 1

strength, come to the Secretariat, have a cup of tea and place your reasonable demands. If you believe in democracy and peace, accept the invitation," Nasim asked the BNP Chairperson and the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament.

He, however, advised her not to coerce Awami League into staging movement because Awami League "knows the anatomy of street agitation".

The home minister said: "If necessary, we will give reply to you on the street. Whenever you will hold meetings, we will do the same at the same venue to show who enjoys people's support."

Referring to the BNP's demand for his resignation, Nasim said it proves the "home minister has become most successful as he dealt with strong hand the criminals they patronised."

Instead of seeking resignation of the government, now BNP is demanding my resignation," he said.

converted the Institute for Post-graduate Studies on Agriculture (IPSA) into Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agriculture University and put it under the education ministry from the agriculture ministry.

The Bangladesh Agriculture University in Mymensingh was handed over to the education ministry during Ershad government.

Experts say, conversion of agricultural colleges into science and technology universities and their hand-over to the education ministry would be set up by acquiring fresh lands in regions where there is no university now.

The Executive Committee for National Economic Council (ECNEC) decided late last year that all new science and technology universities would be set up by acquiring fresh lands in regions where there is no university now.

Ctg BNP

From page 1

case of any resistance from government to the siege programme, insiders said.

About 5000 activists of BNP were supposed to join siege programme in Dhaka.

Earlier the district committee had looked some train bogies and 50 buses for sending the activists to Dhaka, but the booking was cancelled today, party sources said.

Talking to this correspondent, president of Chittagong unit of BNP Mir Md Nasir Uddin said that the activists would stay at the party office here to observe the situation.

Besides, a rally will be organised in front of party office at Nur Ahmed Road at 4 pm on September 12, Nasir added.

Sonia

From page 1

former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi — Sonia's husband — in 1991.

A Gandhi family friend lost the seat narrowly last year.

Sonia had a tough time entering the election office, with nearly 10,000 cheering men, women and children surrounding the building eager to get a glimpse of the Congress chief.

Many showered the smiling Sonia with rose petals. Large numbers of people, including children, also stood on houses located on both sides of the town's narrow roads, clapping.

Congress supporters kept up a steady chant of slogans and waved colourful posters of the Nehru-Gandhi family.



Dr Shameem's qulkhawani today

The qulkhawani of Dr Shameem Ahmed who died in a plane crash recently, will be held today, instead of tomorrow, says a press release.

The qulkhawani will be held at Dr Shameem's father's residence (House No 40, Rd No 4/A, Dhanmondi).

All friends, relatives and well-wishers have been requested to attend the qulkhawani.

EU on CHT

From page 1

Communication (BCDJC) organised the discussion at the BRAC centre at Rajendrapur in Gazipur district. J V Ketelsen, First Counsellor of EC delegation in Bangladesh, Zillul Hye Razi, Economic and Information Officer and Robert Hyndrick Food Security Adviser of EC and Nayeemul Islam Khan BCDJC Executive Director also took part in the discussion.

The ambassador said the EU wants to participate in development activities there in line with the CHT peace accord.

He disagreed with some news items that donors always supported the tribal people.

Referring to some development programmes taken up by the Local Government and Engineering department LGED, the EU Ambassador said those were being implemented in a 'top down method' without participation of local people. This is not acceptable to the donors, he said.

Asked about the amount of funds which the EU wants to spend for development of CHT, EU officials said they are yet to make any assessment.

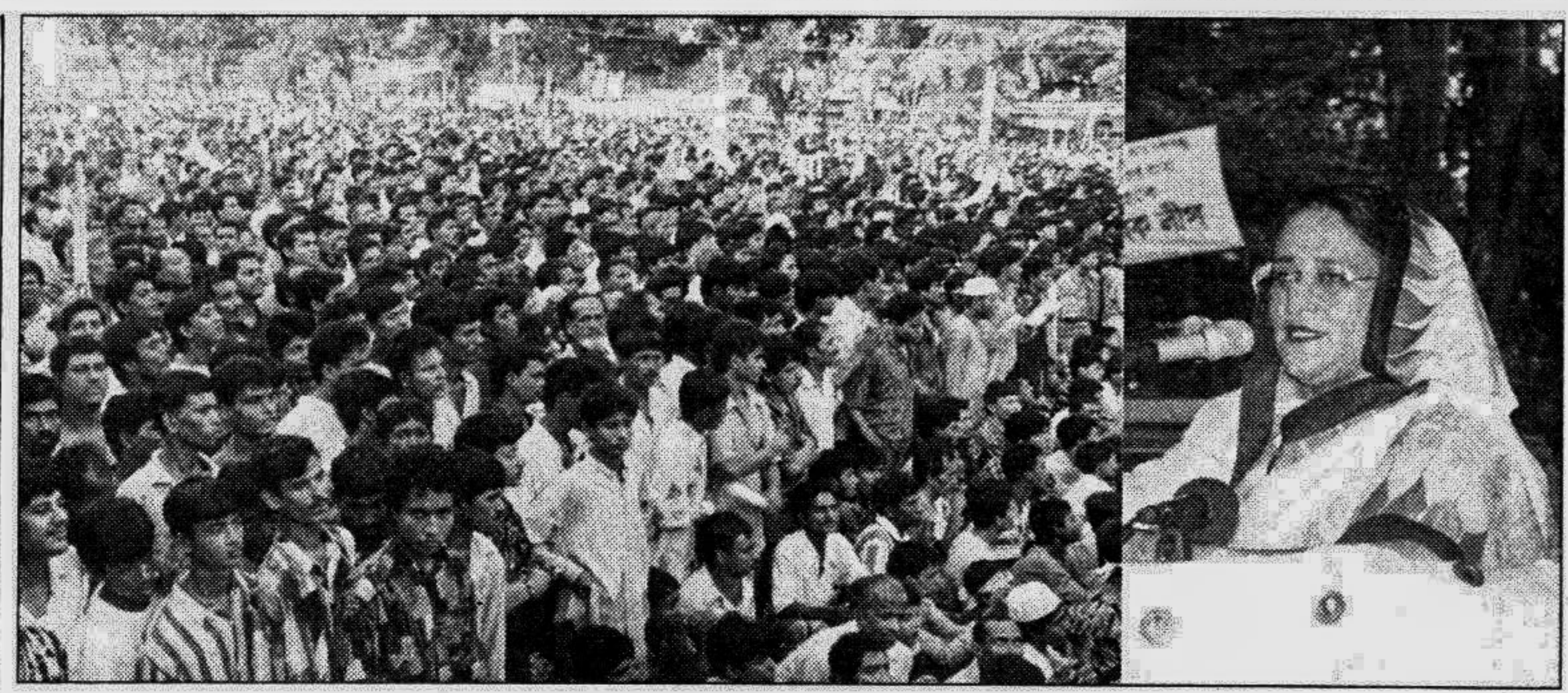
JV Ketelsen said the EU gave 8.5 billion US dollars as grants and donation mainly for poverty alleviation during 1974-1997. During the same period, US and Japan provided 4.9 billion and 3.1 billion dollars respectively for the same purpose, he noted.

The EU funds was channelled through the government and Non-Government Organisation (NGOs).



The last frontier!

The road divider on Biswa Road in the city has become the last resort for Zulekha Begum (with a baby in her lap) and others evicted from a slum at Sabujbagh last month.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressing a public meeting at Kalabagan Playground in the city yesterday. — PID photo

Pak team due Tuesday, to help boost tea export

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, Sept 10: A Pakistani tea delegation arrives here on Tuesday for talks with Tea Board officials to help increase Bangladesh's tea export to Pakistan, sources said.

The 14-member delegation will be headed by Pakistan Tea Association Chairman Hanif Janoo. Chairman of Bangladesh Tea Growers Association AGI Chowdhury told this correspondent today.

A joint communiqué is expected to be signed between the two countries to increase the volume of tea export to Pakistan, he said.

During its 4-day stay, the delegation is also scheduled to visit some tea gardens in Sylhet and attend weekly international tea auction held in the port city, he added.

The delegation is coming at the invitation of Bangladesh Tea Growers Association.

Chowdhury said the delegation will be apprised of the developments in tea sector to boost tea export to Pakistan.

Pakistan was once the largest buyer of Bangladesh tea. Once Pakistan used to buy up to 18 million kgs per year though it came down to 5 million kgs last year. So the visit is quite important for us," Chowdhury said.

Other officials said a decision has been taken to hold tea

fairs in Poland, Pakistan and Middle East countries to boost export. Tea export has fallen in the last few years.

Tea export in fiscal 98-99 was recorded at 23.50 million kgs, down from 24.35 million kgs in 97-98 and 25.39 million kgs in 96-97.

Tea brokers and traders said tea export declined in recent years due to competition from Kenyan tea.

Chowdhury however said increase in home consumption is another reason behind fall in exports.

He said home consumption has now increased to 30 million kgs from around 15 million kgs 10 years ago.

"If the increasing trend in internal consumption continues without increase in production, our export of tea may be threatened," he observed.

About 55 million kgs of tea were produced in 156 gardens in the country, Bangladesh tea is exported to 25 countries of the world.

Meanwhile, Pakistani buyers for the first time in this season, lent active support to weekly tea auction held here on Tuesday, ahead of the visit of Pakistani delegation.

Average price of tea was Tk 56.55 per kg, an increase of Tk 2, brokers said.

PSI: NBR conditions

From page 1

companies in the country with worldwide network and reputation.

"Banks, financial institutions, leasing and insurance companies, government and semi-government organisations are accepting inspection certificates issued by the local companies inside and outside Bangladesh," he claimed.

One source alleged that the pre-condition was set to keep local companies away from participating in the bid and award the job only to foreign companies.

The BICA has urged the government to re-consider the pre-condition.

The government withdrew the pre-shipment inspection system in 1994 as some of the companies selected for conducting inspection failed to do their job properly. Of the six companies, two were suspended for alleged violation of terms,

sources noted.

The NBR circular also asked the applicants to submit a certificate from a foreign country saying that it had at least five years' experience in 'certification of price, quantity, standard and quality of imported goods and also classification of duty and taxes'.

The BICA leader said that this would discourage the local companies from participating in the bid because obtaining such a certificate is very difficult for them.

They have decided to meet the finance minister, NBR chairman and the Prime Minister's political adviser to apprise them of the negative impact of mandatory pre-shipment inspection, he said.

NBR Chairman Abdul Moyeed Chowdhury could not be contacted despite repeated attempts.

Gulam Nabi Azad to quit as Cong SG if Sonia....

BANGALORE, Sept 10: Congress general secretary Gulam Nabi Azad today vowed to quit his post if the party president Sonia Gandhi's margin of victory was less than one lakh votes in the bitterly fought election for Bellary Lok Sabha seat against BJP Sushma Swaraj, reports PTI.

"If it (margin) is less than one lakh, I will be the first to quit from general secretary," Azad, who is in-charge of party's Karnataka's affairs and who spearheaded the party's polls management in the high-voltage contest in Bellary, told reporters here.

Azad asserted that the Congress would be able to secure majority on its own in the assembly polls in Karnataka.

2 quit Cong

Congress party suffered a setback today when two of its leaders resigned in West Bengal, the United News of India said.

Pankaj Banerjee and Sadhan Pandey quit the party alleging the Congress had failed to effectively combat West Bengal's 22 years of Communist rule.

Maneka says —

Union social justice minister Maneka Gandhi has questioned Sonia Gandhi's credentials to become prime minister saying she had not even done any social work.

It is true she (Sonia) is a foreigner. But more than that, she has not done any social work. She does not have any training. We are not born politicians, but you learn, study and most important you feel you should do something, Gandhi said in reply to a question in Star TV's 'Janata Ki Adalat'.

Calcutta mourns death of Pulak Bandopadhyay

CALCUTTA, Sept 10: A pall of gloom descended on the music industry here with the tragic death of lyricist Pulak Bandopadhyay who had enthralled thousands of music lovers over the past five decades, reports PTI.

Bandopadhyay's body, clad in *Dhoti* and *Kurta*, was recovered from the Hooghly at 1100 hours yesterday after a joint search by the river traffic police, the Howrah police and Calcutta police since Tuesday evening. His son Piyal identified the body.

A suicide note by the 69-year-old, blaming no one for his death, was recovered yesterday by the local police from his residence at Salkia in Howrah district.

Expressing shock at the untimely death of Bandopadhyay, noted Bengali singer-composer Jatileswar Mukhopadhyay said this would create a void in contemporary Bengali music.

Speaking amid sobs, singer Nirmala Mishra, who had immortalised many of his songs, described Bandopadhyay as an excellent lyricist.

Shyamal Gupta, considered a member of so-called 'Trinity' along with Bandopadhyay and Gouriprasanna Mazumder said his death was an irreplaceable loss to Bengali modern music.

Expressing shock at his death West Bengal Information and Cultural Affairs Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharjee said he had enriched contemporary Bengali music with his lyrics.

8 dacoits held in Jhenidah

From Our Correspondent

JHENIDAH, Sept 10: Villagers caught eight dacoits and later handed them over to Kali-gani thana police this morning. Police said, a gang of about 12 dacoits were returning after committing dacoity in the houses of Noni Gopal and Motiar at village Gopalpur.

When they reached near Keyaban at around 6 am, the villagers surrounded them and caught eight of the 12 dacoits. The rest four, however, managed to flee.

The villagers recovered looted goods from the dacoits and handed them over to Kali-gani police.

Police identified the dacoits as Nasiruddin, Abdul Karim, Minto, Liton, Abdur Rahman, Razzak and Mannan.

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