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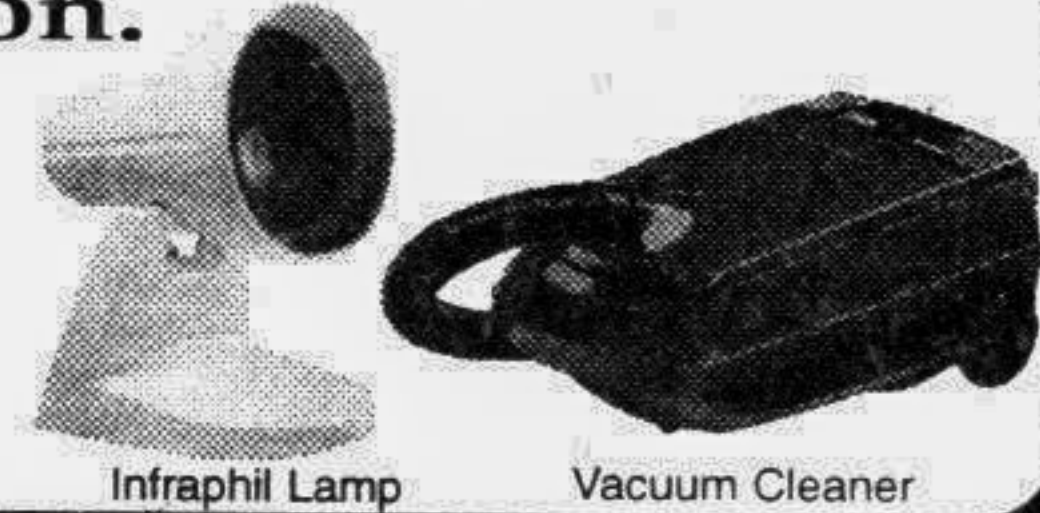
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Two teenagers held hostage at DU hall

By DU Correspondent

Two teenage boys were allegedly kidnapped from the city's Elephant Road by a group of Dhaka College students and held hostage for about two hours in Mohsin Hall of Dhaka University yesterday.

The victims were Anis Al Rajib, a HSC first year student of Lalmatia Oriental College, and his friend Tanveer Hossain.

Dhaka University authorities, following the allegations, yesterday formed a three-member probe committee led by Dr. Md. Khairul Hossain, provost of the hall, to investigate the incident.

According to sources, the kidnappers, led by one Sujon, a Dhaka College student, allegedly kidnapped Rajib and Tanveer from Elephant Road at about 3 pm. The boys were taken at gun point to Mohsin Hall with the help of some Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) activists, it was learnt.

The abductors first beat up the victims on the terrace of the hall building and later held them hostage in two separate rooms. They then telephoned Rajib's mother and demanded ransom.

Rajib's mother took back the two boys at around 5 pm from the guest room of the hall, sources said.

When contacted over telephone, the traumatised mother declined to disclose any details about the two boys freed.

"We are happy to get back our only child and are not interested in pursuing any legal actions against anyone," she said.

Sources, preferring anonymity told The Daily Star that the kidnappers including Adnan and Palash of Dhaka College is backed by the BCL hall unit president Shafiq. Some outsider terrorists, including Munna and Wadud, who have been sheltered at the hall, were also involved in the incident, they alleged.

Two rooms -- 212 and 331 -- of Mohsin Hall, are notoriously known as 'remand rooms' and are used regularly for the purpose of torturing, the sources added.

DU Vice-chancellor Prof. AK Azad Chowdhury said, "The authorities will take stern action against those involved in the incident and I have already formed a probe committee."



Anti-hartal activists this time opted for a rickshaw rally. There was another difference yesterday. Motor rallies during previous hartals were organised and led by the ruling party's city MPs, but none of them of that stature were seen on the volatile streets dominated by hyperactive law-enforcers.

—Star photo by Anisur Rahman

ADB sees 5pc growth in 2000

The country is expected to achieve a higher growth rate of five per cent in the current fiscal if weather condition remains favourable and the agricultural sector performs better, Asian Development Bank (ADB) said in a recent report, says BSS.

"Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth during 2000 is projected at 5 per cent. The agricultural sector is anticipated to maintain the average growth rate of recent years provided weather condition remains favourable," the Manila-based Bank said in its Asian Development Outlook Update.

The report said the country's 1998/99 GDP was revised to grow at 4.8 per cent after a bumper harvest of its boro winter paddy. A previous estimate was around 3.3 per cent.

The country's food grain production might reach 21.4 million tonnes in 1998/99

against 20.7 million tonnes in the previous year, thanks to a recovery drive launched by the government, the Bank said.

It said: "Although the agricultural sector has apparently overcome the impact of the floods, manufacturing sector growth is estimated to have slipped to 2.8 per cent from (the) 9.2 per cent of the preceding years."

The floods during the August-October period in 1998, the longest in Bangladesh's history, destroyed nearly four million tonnes of rice in the fields.

"Despite a large inflow of external assistance, foreign exchange reserves declined to 1.5 billion dollars (2 to 3 months of imports) at the end of 1999, from \$1.7 billion in the corresponding period last year," the report said.

It said the country's budget deficit also rose to 5.3 per cent of GDP compared with 4.2 per

cent of GDP in 1997/98.

"The deficit has increased due to flood-induced fall in revenues and an increase in public expenditure," it said.

The ADB report said higher food prices fuelled the country's inflation rate to 12.7 per cent in December in 1998, but it dropped to 7.5 per cent in April this year with a decline in food prices.

The Bank forecast the country's inflation at 8 per cent in the current year from an average of 9 per cent in 1998/99.

It said: "The greatest challenge facing the government is to revive economic and institutional reforms to reduce pervasive poverty."

Bangladesh could only overcome the challenge through prudent macroeconomic management and reforms in financial and administrative sector, and private sector development. But it said the country's

1999/2000 budget has emphasised mobilisation of domestic resources, promotion of export-led industrial expansion and private investment through measures including floating government-guaranteed bonds amounting to 200 million dollar.

Dhaka team leaves for gas seminar in US

By Staff Correspondent

Energy Secretary Towfik-e-Elahi Chowdhury and Petro-bangla Chairman Mosharraf Hossain left for the US yesterday to participate in a seminar on gas utilisation in Bangladesh.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who also left Dhaka Monday night to attend the United Nations General Assembly in New York, is expected to participate in the seminar, beginning on Thursday.

Multinational oil companies including Unocal, UMC, Enron, Mobil and Chevron and Texaco will participate in the seminar. The Prime Minister is likely to visit the head office of Unocal later.

The seminar is being organised by the US-Bangladesh Business Council, a forum of American oil companies.

The seminar is likely to be moderated by the chief of American Chamber of Commerce in Dhaka, Forrest E Cookson, who is also conducting a study on gas utilisation in Bangladesh.

Sources said that the prime objective of this seminar is to convince Bangladesh that it must export natural gas to make foreign investment in the country viable.

Experts criticise the move for gas utilisation study saying that there should be a study on gas reserve first. Besides, official sources say, there has hardly been any interaction between the government agencies holding data on gas and those conducting the utilisation study.

Incessant rains

Fresh areas in 3 dists inundated

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAH, Sept 14: Incessant rains have deteriorated the flood situation in Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj and Naogaon districts.

All the rivers in three districts marked a further rise today.

In Rajshahi, the char lands were flooded and low lying lands went under water. Hari-pur union parishad chairman Fazle Rizvi Al-Hasan said that char Jagia, Sonakandi, char Nabinagar, Easri, Harupur, Naboganga, Betpara, Khola-bona, Madavpur and Gohumabona villages of his union went under water.

About two thousand people were marooned and at least 15 mud-houses were completely damaged.

Majedur Rahman of Hari-pur union parishad in Poba thana said that char Dierkhidpur, char Taranganar and char Mahar Dierpur were submerged by flood waters.

In Chapainawabganj, the char lands and some villages in Ujirpur union were submerged.

About 14,000 hectares of lands with standing crops in Khatwara, Kashimpur, Meerat, Pona, Baragacha and Parail union parishads in Ramnagar thana in Naogaon were damaged by the flood.

Local meteorology office recorded 25 mm of rainfall from 6 am to 6 pm today.

Meanwhile, Padma swelled further and was flowing seven centimetres above the danger level at Rajshahi this evening.

Ctg processionist dies of heart attack

Port city sees off second day peacefully

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Sept 14: A pro-BNP Jubo Dal activist died of heart attack at a procession at Bahaddarhat in the city during hartal hours today, police and party sources said.

The dead was identified as Nurul Absar, 30.

Absar suddenly collapsed on the road at around 11 am while a procession of BNP activists was in progress, party sources said.

Elsewhere in the port city, barring some stray incidents of violence including blasts of crackers, the second day of the three-day opposition shutdown passed off almost peacefully, according to police and witnesses.

All kinds of vehicles except rickshaws stayed off the road today and shops and business establishments remained closed.

Seven pickets were arrested from different parts in the city today. Police and paramilitary BDR were deployed at all important points of the city.

Witnesses said police and opposition activists clashed at

Alankar crossing and in Dewanhat area in the morning.

Meanwhile, president of Chittagong city unit of BNP Mir Mohammed Nasiruddin alleged, police harassed his party activists at different places. He said police forcibly took away microphones his party activists were using at Bahaddarhat, Dewanhat and Alankar crossing.

Additional commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police Shahidullah Khan, when contacted, however denied the allegation. He said microphones were not allowed at those places without permission. "Besides, we had to be always in action to maintain law and order," he added.

In Chittagong port, partial cargo handling was carried out inside the jetties although delivery of goods remained suspended, port sources said.

The government asked the port authorities to provide police escort if any importers desired to take delivery of goods from the port. But no importers asked for any escort, port sources informed.

New bank begins business tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

After long seven years of closure, Bangladesh Commerce and Investment Ltd. (BCIL), a financial institution which was closed down following management failure, will re-emerge as a full-fledged bank from tomorrow.

Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria is expected to formally inaugurate the bank named as Bangladesh Commerce Bank Limited (BCBL).

When the government suspended BCI operation on April 28, 1992, it had deposits worth Tk 131.26 crore.

In 1996, the government reconstituted BCI by promulgat-

ing an ordinance and decided to turn it into a bank.

Addressing a press briefing at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday, Professor Abdul Mannan Chowdhury, chairman of the bank, said the bank would have 24 branches in places.

Managing director Sheikh Aminuddin Ahmed and directors of BCBL Abdur Karim, Fida Hossain, Fariduddin Ahmed, Dr Monirul Islam and S A Wahed attended the press conference.

The paid up capital of BCBL is Tk 92 crore while its authorised capital is Tk 200 crore.

Democracy at stake under this govt: Khaleda

BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday said observance of all out hartal demonstrates that people have lost their trust and confidence in the government, reports UNB.

In a press statement on the second day of the three-day hartal, she protested police action on the BNP workers and deployment of police at the BNP central office preventing party workers from entering it.

Khaleda Zia said the government has been trying to take away the democratic rights of the people by attacking meetings and processions. The speeches and actions of the party in power prove that a hard-won democracy is at stake under this government.

She said people are taking part spontaneously in the current movement to protect the country.

The BNP Chairperson said that being unnerved by the movement, the government has intensified its repression on the opposition and is framing a new black law in the name of public security in its bid to stop the opposition.

PM makes brief stopover at Brussels Airport

BRUSSELS, Sept 14: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina made a brief stopover here today on her way to New York, reports BSS.

The prime minister, who arrived here at 0930 local time, was received at the Brussels Airport by Bangladesh Ambassador to Belgium Khairul Anam and other officials of the mission.

Total expenses for each Hajj pilgrim fixed at Tk 88,000

The government has fixed the total expenses for each Hajj pilgrim at Tk 88,000, reports UNB.

The decision was taken at a high-level meeting relating to the formulation of Hajj policy for the year 2000 at the conference room of the Religious Affairs Ministry yesterday with State Minister Moulana Mohammad Nurul Islam in the chair.

The meeting was informed that the next Hajj would be held on March 15, 2000 subject to the sighting of Zilhaj moon.

The meeting also approved a quota of 40,000 pilgrims from Bangladesh for the next Hajj.

The remaining Hajj expenses will be taken from those pilgrims who will deposit Tk 16,000 as advance house rent by October 25 this year.

W Indies chase 226 in decider

TORONTO, Sept 14: India scored 225 for seven Tuesday against the West Indies in the third and final match of the two countries' DMC Cup tournament, reports AFP.

After a slow start, India stepped up the pressure in the final 10 overs of the match with Rahul Dravid hitting the four that put India over the 200 mark, before being bowled by Mervyn Dillon for 77.

The series is currently tied 1-1.

Caribbean captain Brian Lara won the toss and asked India to bat.

Clash with supporters of Sayeedi in Sylhet: 10 hurt

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Sept 14: At least ten people were injured in a clash between the activists of all-party alliance and Jamaat-Shibir at Beanibazar thana headquarters today.

The trouble broke out when Jamaat-Shibir activists attacked an all-party activist announcing programme for holding a rally at the thana headquarters protesting remarks by Jamaat leader Moulana Delwar Hossain Sayeedi about the 'Sylhet Community' living in UK.

Protesting this incident, the all-party alliance comprising AL, BNP, JP and JSD held a rally at College Road Point at 2 pm.

The speakers at the rally declared Moulana Sayeedi 'persona non grata' in Beanibazar. After the rally, the all-party activists brought out a procession and burnt the effigy of Moulana Sayeedi. They also attacked the Jamaat-Shibir office at New Market and damaged furniture.

A medicine shop owned by

Public Security Act Left parties to hold protest rally in city Sept 22

By Staff Correspondent

Leaders of 11 left-leaning political parties yesterday condemned recent police repression on the opposition and decided to hold a rally in the city on September 22, protesting the government's plan to enact a new law called Public Security Act.

The leaders held a meeting in the city yesterday morning with president of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) Manjurul Ahsan Khan in the chair, says a press release.

The political leaders were highly critical of the police attack on Monday's human-chain programme in the city. The programme was held by Gano Forum demanding rehabilitation of evicted slum dwellers.

They condemned the deliberate road barricade put up by one pro-Awami League union parishad chairman on the day of the opposition's Secretariat siege programme.

Among others, the meeting was attended by Rashed Khan Menon, Nirmal Sen, Khaleduzzaman, Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, Mujahidul Islam Selim, Azizul Islam Khan, AFM Mahbulul Haq, Dilip Barua, Iqbal Majumder, Haji Abdus Samad, Nurul Rahman Selim, Pankaj Bhattacharya, Morshed Ali, Fazle Hossain Badsha, Bazlur Rashid Feroj, Mahmudur Rahman Babu, and Abdus Salam.

One killed, 6 hurt as ship catches fire in Sitakunda

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Sept 14: One labourer was roasted alive and six others injured when an old ship brought for scrapping caught fire at Sitakunda ship-breaking yard under Sitakunda thana this afternoon, police and hospital sources said.

The dead was identified as Md Alauddin, 18. The injured were admitted to Chittagong medical hospital.

Police said the fire originated after a gas cylinder exploded at the time of scrapping at 5-25 pm today.

On receipt of information, fire fighters rushed to the spot and brought the blaze under control.

Hartal: Acting FBCCI chief concerned

Acting President of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) M A Munim yesterday expressed his grave concern over the three-day hartal call by the opposition, reports BSS.

In a statement Munim said, "Hartal is suicidal and will bring disaster for us in today's competitive world market." He reiterated the demand of the business community to shun this suicidal politics and solve problems through discussions sitting across the table.

The FBCCI acting chief mentioned that during the secretariat siege programme of the opposition on Sunday some miscreants threw bricks at the buildings of different organisations in Motijheel area and damaged the windows of those buildings.

He called upon the opposition to keep industrial and commercial organisations out of the purview of hartal.

Nasim orders Identify policemen who took bribe from Ershad Sikder

Home Minister Mohammad Nasim has directed the agencies concerned to identify the police personnel who took bribes from the recently arrested terrorist Ershad Sikdar of Khulna, reports BSS.

The Home Minister's directives came in the wake of a series of press reports on the top terrorist of Khulna who had reportedly legalised many unlawful activities by bribing the police officials in Khulna and other places.

While talking with newsmen at his Secretariat office yesterday afternoon, the minister said Ershad Sikdar had created a reign of terror in Khulna. He had emerged as a terrorist during the regime of General Ershad and was nurtured by Begum Khaleda Zia's government.

Four Indian robbers caught in Thakurgaon

THAKURGAON, Sept 14: Four Indian dacoits were arrested by BDR with the help of villagers at Krishnokantot village under Tentulia thana of Panchagarh district Monday night, reports UNB.

Police said sensing the presence of the bandits at the village, local people surrounded them and caught four of the gang of dozen with the help of BDR patrol team passing the area. The rest eight managed to escape.

The four were identified as Moqbul Hossain, Boalu, Moqbul and Nazu of Holidigha village of Fasdhey thana of Darjeeling district in India.

They were handed over to Tentulia police.

Journalists talk 'green agenda' in Comilla

KOTBARI (Comilla), Sept 14: Environmental journalists, activists and experts from some 30 countries assembled here at the BARD complex, beginning a four-day conference focusing on issues of a wide range of conservation concerns, reports UNB.

The theme of the congress, being held under the joint auspices of the Asia-Pacific Forum of Environmental Journalists (APEJ), Commonwealth Environmental Journalists' Association (CEJA) and Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB), is "Water and Environment: Role of the Media."

Although attendance at the conference was partially disrupted by hartal, the organisers went ahead with their programme. Environment and Forest Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, who was scheduled to inaugurate the congress, could not make it — as it happened with some other officials and resource persons who remained stranded in Dhaka due to the shutdown.

At the inaugural session, A Z M Enayeturrahman Khan, Editor-in-Chief of Holiday, delivered the congress lecture on the theme of water and environment.

The green agenda is hopefully unfolding in Bangladesh," he said pointing out that the civil society in the country was increasingly getting involved with environmental concern.

Khan said that environmental issues should be made part

of the political agenda by the country's political parties.

The inaugural function was addressed, among others, by APEJ chairman Dr Dharman Wickremaretna, Robert Kihara of CEJA, Juliet Fox of Friends of the Earth of Australia, Aditya Man Shrestha from Nepal and Khondokar Monirul Alam, president of the Jatiya Press Club.

Dr Liqa Raschid-Sally, a water expert from the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), gave presentation on Policy Dialogue Model (PODIUM) focusing on the future scenario of demand for water by the year 2025.

Enayeturrahman Khan in his paper said the media in Bangladesh have been high-lighting these not only for purpose of dissemination of information, but also as an active agent in awareness — and movement-building on a number of environmental concerns like the choking of the water bodies in the capital and other urban areas, the strangling of the Buriganga waters by pollutants, sewage and industrial effluence.

But he added the media also have a significant role in highlighting the civic concerns of the flood action plan pertaining to the local population and their voiced needs.

"The crisis that we are witnessing today whether in scarcity and pollution of water, degradation of soil, devastation of forests and the spreading ex-

inction of bio-diversity, is essentially a crisis of the human spirit," he observed.

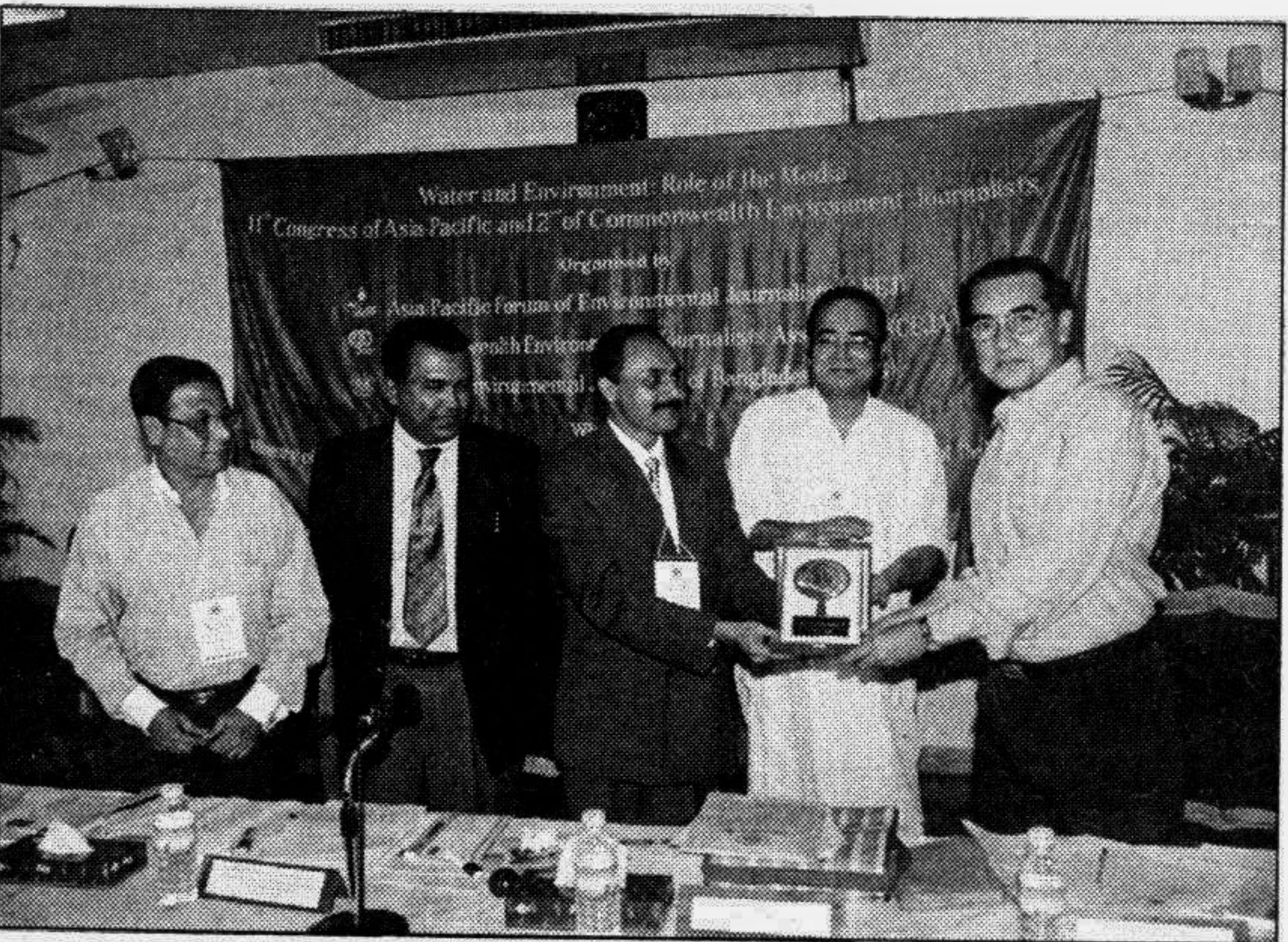
He concluded: "Deserts spreading in the Asian continent at the rate of a million hectares a year only mirror the wasteland of our soul. We have sold our souls to Lucifer for a handful of silver."

Mahfuz Anam, Editor of The Daily Star, who was given the Green Pen Award 1999 for his outstanding contribution to environmental journalism, said one of the challenges of present day newsmen is creating awareness about environmental issues, which are so akin to our everyday life.

He said the media can play a great role in protecting the country's environment. "Our newsmen will have to change their mindset to perform their social responsibilities," Anam said. Many of the environmental issues like the 'water agenda' should be thought over again, he observed.

The APEJ-CEJA International Green Pen Award was given to three leading journalists who made significant contributions in the field of environmental journalism. They are: Dr Dharman Wickremaretna of Sri Lanka, Zaigham Khan of Pakistan and Nina Ratulele of Fiji.

APEJ-ADB environmental journalism award went to Abu Taher Khokon of Bangladesh for photography and Alex Rey V Pal of the Philippines for reporting.



Mahfuz Anam, editor of The Daily Star, receives the Green Pen '99 award at an international congress of environmental journalists in Comilla yesterday.

The Institution Of Engineers, Bangladesh
Headquarters, Ramna, Dhaka-1000

Notice Inviting Nominations

Nominations are invited for various posts outlined in the schedule of posts for the election of The Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh for the term 2000-2001. Nomination papers duly completed are to be submitted in closed envelope for each post to the Chairman, Central Election Committee IEB HQ, Ramna, Dhaka-1000 latest by 2000 hrs. 16th Oct, 1999. Set of Nomination papers along with instructions and schedule of posts, etc. can be obtained from the IEB HQ's and respective Centres/Sub Centres.

Engr. Md. Anwarul Alam
Chairman
Central Election Committee (CEC)

Editor : Mahfuz Anam

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