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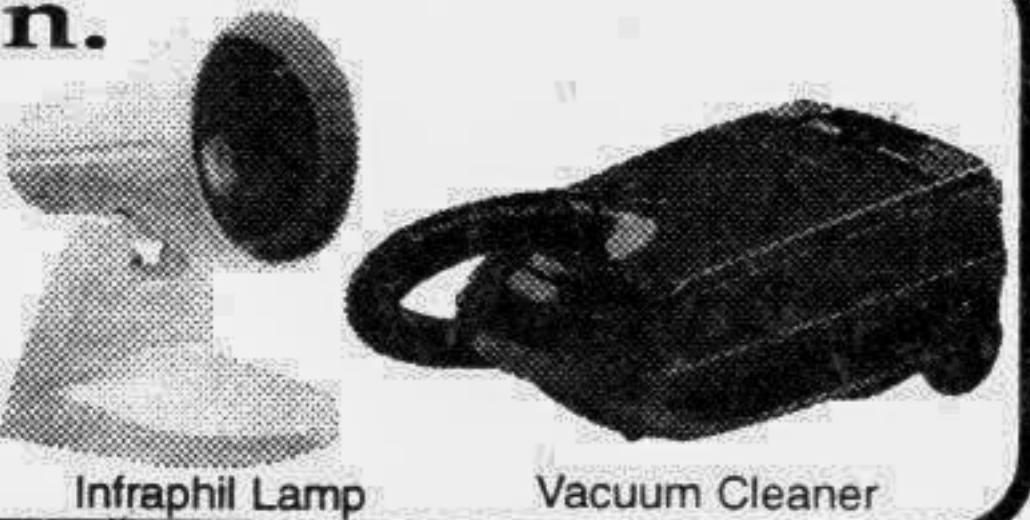
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## Two teenagers held hostage at DU hall

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 Sujan, 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 a ransom.

## 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 Beaufort Bazaar 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 Syedhi 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 Beaufort Bazaar.

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 in 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, A.F.M. Mahbubul Haq, Dilip Barua, Iqbal Majumder, Haji Abdus Samad, Nurul Rahim Selim, Pankaj Bhattacharya, Morshed Ali, Fazle Hossain Badsha, Bazlur Rashid Ferjor, Mahmudur Rahman Babu, and Abdus Salam.

**One killed, 6 hurt as ship catches fire in Sitakunda**

By Staff Correspondent

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

The dead was identified as Md Alaudin, 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 brickbats 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**

By Staff Correspondent

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

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 Moobul Hossain, Boalu, Moobul and Nauz of Holdigach village of Fasideya thana of Darjeeling district in India.

They were handed over to Tentulia police.



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

—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 1998, 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 dollars.

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.

The Prime Minister is likely to visit the head office of Unocal later.

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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.

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 AFEJ-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 Wickremarathne of Sri Lanka, Zaiq Khan of Pakistan and Nina Ratuleka of Fiji.

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

## Journalists talk 'green agenda' in Comilla

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

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

The theme of the congress, being held under the joint auspices of the Asia-Pacific Forum of Environmental Journalists (AFEJ), 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 Enayetullah Khan, Editor-in-Chief of Holiday, delivered the congress lecture on the theme of water and environment.

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-

tinction 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.

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Fresh areas in 3 dists inundated

Incessant rains

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, 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. Haripur union parishad chairman Fazle Rizvi Al-Hasan said that char Jagia, Sonakandi, char Nabirnagar, Easri, Harupur, Naboganga, Betpara, Khola-bona, Madupur and Gohumabon villages of his union were under water.

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

Majedur Rahaman of Harian union parishad in Poba thana said that char Dierkhidpur, char Taranager and char Majhar Dierpur were submerged by flood waters.

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

About 14,000 hectares of lands with standing crops in Kateswar, Kashimpur, Meerat, Poma, Baragacha and Parail union parishads in Raminagar 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.

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