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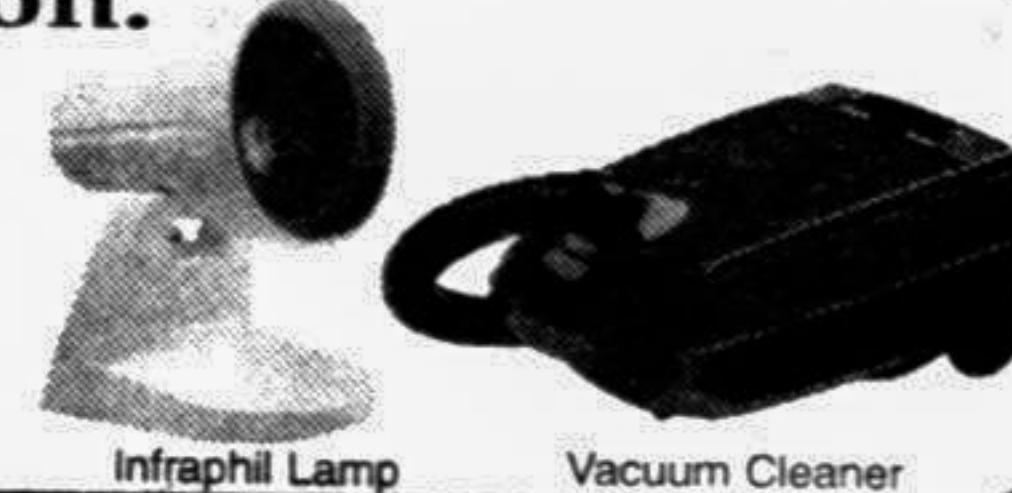
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# Move on to grab Tanguar Haor defying govt plan

By Shehab Ahmed

The fate of Tanguar Haor in Sunamganj along the border is hanging in the balance as some local influential people are pulling strings in Dhaka to obtain lease of the 9725 hectare wetland, declared last April as an ecologically critical area (ECA) by the government.

After declaring the near-fresh water lake as an ECA, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) sent a proposal to Prime Minister's Office (PMO) last week to declare it as 'Ramsar' site in compliance with an universal declaration at the Iranian city of Ramsar to better conserve the world's wetlands. Bangladesh is a signatory to the Ramsar Convention.

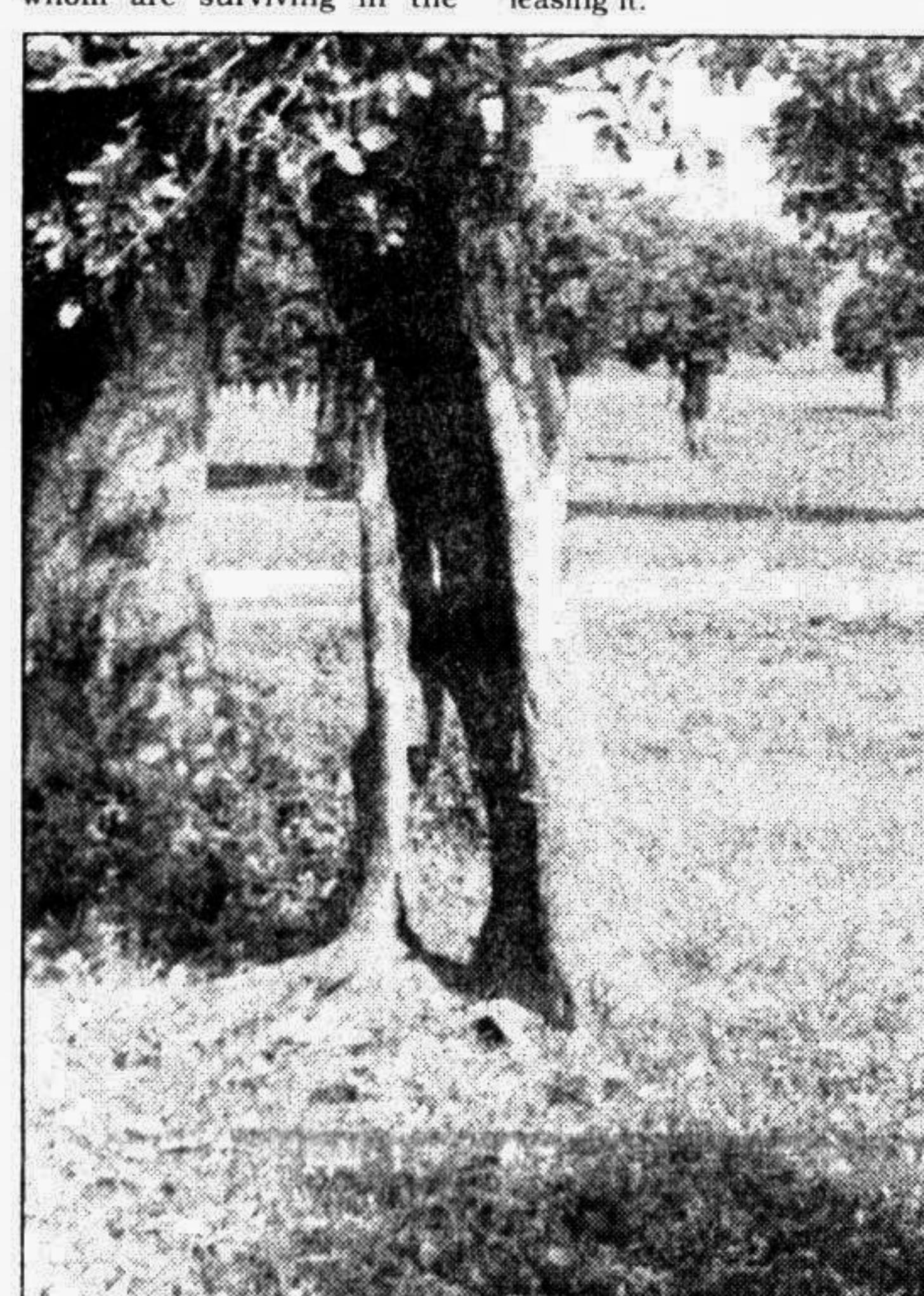
MOEF also wrote letters on August 9 to the land ministry, ministry of local government and others concerned for retaining the wetland's status as ECA and not to renew a lease which expired in December last year. It pointed out in those letters that it was being considered to be declared a Ramsar site to preserve the wetlands in pristine forms and better manage their resources under an integrated plan involving the community.

On expiry of the lease the influential ones backed by political high-ups put pressure on the land ministry officials to get their files cleared on leasing the haor for a sum of Tk 45 lakh, highly placed sources told The Daily Star yesterday.

But land ministry officials who had considered the lease proposal declined to make any comment on the fate of the lake. The MOEF officials refused to say anything other than confirming sending of the proposal to the Prime Minister's Office to declare it as a Ramsar site.

The haor, a rich home to 250 species, including 17 endangered species of fish, yields at least Tk 10 crore annually from its resources. The resources include the country's lone surviving swamp forest of Hijal, Karach, Gunjikata and Chhongrass, local sources reported.

The leasee, if given the franchise would be tempted to reap a quick harvest in the dry season, going for draining part by part the wetland and reap all the fish. He would be in a hurry to do so since he knew that the lake would soon be declared as a Ramsar site", an expert from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) observed.



A section of the Hijal or swamp forest at Tanguar haor in Sunamganj. It plays an important role in maintaining the wetland's ecosystem. Courtesy: Anisuzzaman Khan

## 22 exposed to radiation in ROK N-mishap

SEOUL, Oct 5: A nuclear leak at a South Korean power plant has exposed 22 workers to low-level radiation, officials said today, reports AFP.

Forty-five litres of heavy water leaked on Monday night during maintenance and safety checks at Wolsong, 260 kilometres southeast of Seoul, the Science and Technology Ministry said.

The reactors were not in operation at the time, it said.

Ministry officials said the leak appeared to have been caused by human error, stressing however that an official investigation was still underway.

"We cannot make a hasty decision yet but it looks like workers made a mistake," the ministry's Han Pung-U told AFP.

The ministry now suspects that the heavy water might have leaked from valves of the moderator. The official declined to give details of the nature of the possible error.

But the official was quick to downplay the seriousness of the heavy water leak, the fourth such incident in South Korea since it launched its nuclear power programme in the late 1970s.

"This was a minor leak. The amount of radiation to which

JKLF leader Amanullah Khan arrested

HAJIRA, Pakistan, Oct 5: Pakistani police arrested a pro-independence Kashmir leader today while he led a march to cross into the Indian-ruled part of disputed Kashmir, witnesses said, reports Reuters.

Amanullah Khan, chairman of Jamiat and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), was arrested with several colleagues at Kathirava village outside Hajira town after a clash in which police used batons, tear gas and fired bullets in the air to disperse hundreds of marchers. Witnesses said several JKLF activists were injured by police batons and there were spots of blood on Khan's white shirt. He was dragged into a police bus.

He said the US wants to do business in different sectors and invest in power and gas sectors.

"I sought full co-operation of the Leader of the Opposition for US business and investment in Bangladesh," he added.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan MP, BNP Chairperson's Advisory Council members M Moshed Khan MP, MM Rezaul Karim and Reaz Rahman were present during the discussion.

**Khaleda**

From page 1  
asked her about future programmes. The BNP chief said the opposition parties have launched a one-point oust-government movement and will carry it forward", Holzman said.

Replies to a question, Holzman said that he also requested the Leader of the Opposition to avoid hartal for creating a favourable atmosphere for US investment in Bangladesh.

Begum Zia told him that BNP did not believe in the politics of hartal but the government forced it to call hartal, Holzman said.

He said the US wants to do business in different sectors and invest in power and gas sectors.

"I sought full co-operation of the Leader of the Opposition for US business and investment in Bangladesh," he added.

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**Editor : Mahfuz Anam**

Published by the Editor from City Publishing House Ltd., 90 Kakrail, Daka-1000 on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd., 52 Motijheel C.A., Daka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No: 11, Road No: 3, Dhanmondi R.A., Dhaka-1205. PABX: 866772-4, Commercial: 866771, Fax No: 88-02-863035, GPO Box No: 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA. Internet edition address: <http://www.dailystarnews.com> and Email address: [dstar@bangla.net](mailto:dstar@bangla.net)

## Indian elections: Vote counting starts today

From Pallab Bhattacharya

NEW DELHI, Oct 5: After the battle comes the countdown for the counting of ballots which starts tomorrow. A countdown bristling with suspense, exit polls notwithstanding.

Anxiety, doubts and questions are the buzzwords at the headquarters of major political parties across India.

Top leaders, winding up a month-long frenzied campaign, are back at the headquarters and have begun stock-taking, assessing their parties' prospects in the just-concluded general elections and charting future course of action.

Although exit polls project a clear majority for the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance, anxiety continues to dog the ruling combine.

What happens if exit polls are wide off the mark? Will Uttar Pradesh, the key state from electoral arithmetic point of view, bring a greater setback for BJP than predicted by pollsters? Will anti-incumbency factor affect the prospects of BJP's key allies like Telugu Desam Party ruling Andhra Pradesh state and Akali Dal governing Punjab?

On the other hand, the edge-of-the-seat-stuff suspense appears to have gripped the main opposition Congress camp. The party hopes psephologists go awfully wrong so that it has a real chance to bounce back to power after four years.

The Congress looks forward with great hopes to its show in states like Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh.

Suspense is also building up among smaller parties like Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi Party, Laloo Prasad Yadav's Rashtriya Janata Dal and of Congress Kanshi Ram's Bahujan Samaj Party and the

Left parties. The exit polls have not given these parties even 100 seats taken together. In the event of a hung parliament, however, these parties will play a role in forming government.

Both CPI (M) General Secretary Harkishan Singh Surjat and Mulayam Singh Yadav claim that neither BJP nor Congress would get enough seats to form government on their own and a "third front" dispensation would be in place.

Political observers are keeping their fingers crossed. They debate what will be the performance of Nationalist Congress Party led by Sharad Pawar especially in Maharashtra, Pawar's home state.

Will Mulayam Singh Yadav and Pawar support a Congress government without Sonia Gandhi as its head, as indicated by them in the party? Both Yadav and Pawar are opposed to Sonia becoming the Prime Minister because of her foreign origin.

Will Congress agree to forming a government sans Sonia just to keep BJP out of power?

Meanwhile, tight security arrangements have been made for counting of ballots for 537 of the total of 543 Lok Sabha seats. Of the six remaining, polling in five and partial re-polling in one will be held later.

The result of 45 constituencies where electronic voting machines were used, will be available early tomorrow.

Among these constituencies are Lucknow, where Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpeyi is in fray. Calcutta South, where T.N. Ninan, Congress leader Mamata Banerjee is contesting and Gandhinagar (Gujarat) where Home Minister K. Alavi is trying his luck.

## Dealing with Shikdar

## AL to take action against partymen

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Oct 5: Leaders and activists of Khulna district and city Awami League and all its front organisations who had financial dealings with Ershad Shikdar will be facing organisational action soon.

The action will be taken as per directive of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina during her recent visit here, said a source in the city Awami League.

The source said that the Prime Minister was briefed by the Detective Branch about some party leaders who were the beneficiaries of Shikdar's wealth.

Meanwhile, businessmen of SMA Rob Shopping Complex decide to file cases against the mayoral candidate for realising money paid against possession of shops if any demolition drive is taken up.

Demolition of the shopping mall was scheduled to start today. But the Railway authorities have kept it in abeyance as Rob has appealed for time till Monday next for showing necessary documents in support of its construction.

Police also identified their owners and their connivance with Shikdar. Some other people having links with the Shikdar empire also have been unveiled.

UNB adds: Police detected at

least 20 institutions, established with the patronage of Ershad Shikdar.

"We got all information that these institutions were established with the help of Ershad and he was the direct beneficiary from these establishments," said a KMP official on condition of anonymity.

The establishments, including transport business and hotels, are either in his own name or his relatives or some of his henchmen.

The identified establishments are: Helal Transport, Jamal Transport, three shops in Jabbar Sarani, Sohag Restaurant, Mamun Traders, Brothers Corporation, Nalsity Project, Sonali Traders, Darbesh Chamber, Noor Transport, Khalifa Bhandar, Gaffar Foods, Star Trading, Taj Trading, Allar Dan Bhandar, Al-Madina Traders and Rakhi Traders.

Police also identified their owners and their connivance with Shikdar. Some other people having links with the Shikdar empire also have been unveiled.

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## Road accidents kill 9 in four districts

At least nine people were killed and 28 injured in separate road accidents in Dhaka, Feni, Sirajganj and Rajshahi yesterday.

UNB adds: Three men were killed and six others injured in road accidents at Sayedabad Bus Stand and in front of Mirpur 10 crossing in the city yesterday.

One of the dead was identified as Alauddin, 22, son of Khoka Mia of Mirpur Section-3.

Hospital sources said one unidentified young man was killed when a tempo collided with a bus at the bus-stand at 5 am.

The injured, identified as Badal, 30, Nurul Islam, 22, Mintu, 26, Humayun, 20, Dilu, 30, and Rahim, 27, were admitted to Dhaka Medical Collage Hospital.

Another unidentified man was run over by a bus at the same bus-stand at 11 am.

Alauddin was also run over by a bus while crossing the road in front of Mirpur 10 crossing at 9 am.

They were declared dead by the doctors on arrival at the DMCH.

Our Correspondent from Feni reports, at least four people were killed and 22 others injured in two separate road accidents on Dhaka-Chittagong highway and Feni-Majidpur Road yesterday.

A special patrol team of BDR searched an engine boat in the river Padma in Chilmari area and recovered 5,800 kilograms of onion. The same team also recovered 7,900 kilograms of sugar from Char Chilmari area yesterday.

Besides, another patrol team recovered 68,714 kilograms of sugar and 36,650 kilograms of onion when they searched 14 engine boats in the river Padma at Uday Nagar.

In another incident, two people died on the spot and 14 others were injured when a Ma-

jide-bound bus collided with a truck at Bakar Bazar on Dhaka-Majidpur road.

The injured were admitted to Feni and Daganbayan hospitals and local clinics.

Of them, the condition of six was stated to be critical.

In Sirajganj, a pedestrian was run over by a speeding pick up van near the link road of Jamuna Bridge yesterday.

Witnesses said the accident occurred when the pick up hit Jahabox, 55, at the Jamuna Bridge link road near Jhaoil over-bridge at 3:30 pm.

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The petition, however, came up for hearing yesterday due to a technical snag.

Meanwhile, Babu yesterday called a press conference where he tried to establish his claim for the UCBL's chair and demanded Zafar's arrest.

He said that Zafar Chowdhury was illegally chairing the board meeting of the bank.

The alliance leaders at a rally today vowed to oust the autocratic government through mass movement.

They called upon the people to attend the public meeting to be addressed by BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at the municipal park in the town on October 9.

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