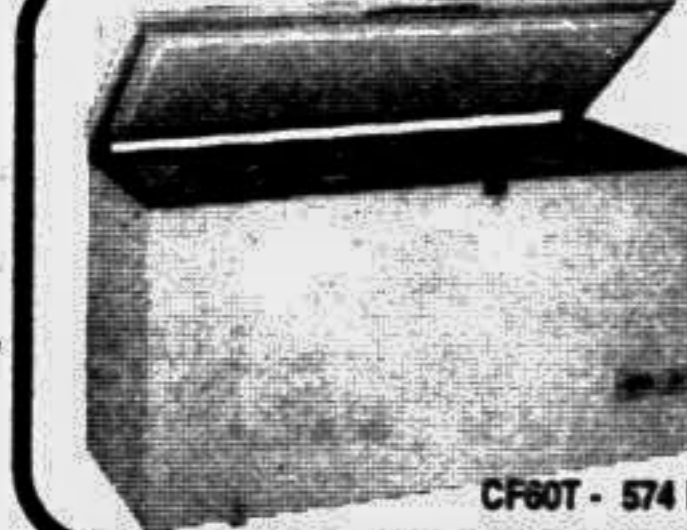




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Down to Earth

City's Recreational Facilities Under Multiple Handicaps

By A S M Nurunnabi

The city-dwellers have been increasingly suffering from want of adequate recreational facilities in the metropolis, poised to become a megacity in the 21st century. The big question that confronts a citizen after the day's work is how to pass his leisure hours or how to spend his holidays.

The limitations in availability of recreational outlets tend to create feeling of a groovy life among many citizens. In the context of our social ethos, the recreational needs of the majority of the city dwellers are simple in nature. Yet in the frenzy of rapid urbanisation, we seem to be deprived of such simple recreational imperatives.

Leaving aside the city's parks and open spaces which, more or less, seem to have lost their appeal as recreational outlets because of the increasing presence of anti-social elements at such places, there are other recreational aspects, such as the movies and the theatres. The movie world does not much attract the middle-class viewers to the city cinema houses because of the poor environmental conditions owing to black-marketing of tickets and other attendant evils. Besides, it has lost much of its appeal on account of the use of videos and television with cable-operated programmes.

As regards theatres, there is a lot of interest and enthusiasm for them. But the existing show houses are few in number. The Mahila Samiti and the Girl Guides' auditoriums are unable to meet the heavy demands made by a large number of theatre groups which have come into existence. The city's cultural activities, however, find some scope in the auditoriums of the German Cultural Centre, British Council, Public Library,

Engineers' Institution, Shilpakala Academy, etc. The auditorium within the precincts of the Osmanli Udyan is reserved for select functions not open to the public.

The art galleries, museum and public libraries that provide an outlet for intellectual recreation, exist on a limited scale in the city, but they are not developed enough to exercise notable pull with those having intellectual interests.

In the city's entertainment world, a major place is taken by sports and games. Those who are interested in such things find entertainment in the existing two stadiums. At these places and the playgrounds nearby, games of one kind or another are played frequently.

Nowadays the affluent section of society and people of the upper middle class find entertainment in cultural programmes organised by big hotels and select clubs. Lately a large number of people both of the higher and lower middle classes are seen to spend their free time in the mushrooming fast food joints and gossiping in the absence of suitable opportunities for entertainment.

A new element has been lately added to the world of entertainment in the form of concerts on western pattern. Band music is now the heart throb of many young men and women. There are some band groups which have won the hearts of many. These groups hold their concerts at many places, including the posh areas of the city. Attendance of large numbers of people at such concerts is a pointer to their increasing popularity.

The Dhaka Zoo at Mirpur occupies an important place in providing recreation to a large number of people, mainly comprising children. Some people

like to spend their free time in a manner marked by a typically Bengali phenomenon called "adda" (gossip session). It can take place at venues such as drawing rooms, open terrace of houses, park benches, neighbourhood clubs and even vacant spaces beside busy roads. Some claim that such means of social intercourse exert a strong recreational impact.

Scope also exists for introducing boating on a regular basis in the lake meandering through the Ramna Park. At the Parjatan Corporation restaurant situated on the bank of the lake near Zia International Airport, boating facilities are reportedly available. Boating facility is also available on a rather small scale at certain other places, such as Mirpur Zoo, Botanical Garden and the lake near Sangsad Bhaban. Such facilities can be suitably developed by charging small fees from persons interested in boating as a recreational sport.

The city dwellers seek the excitement and joy of river cruise which is arranged from time to time by the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation. Such river cruise is made lively and entertaining by arrangement of programmes of songs and dances and other variety shows by well-known artistes on board the launch.

The above outline of recreational facilities presently available can hardly be rated as adequate for the teeming millions of the city. In order to create a healthy environment in the life of the citizens of the city, there is need, as we stand on the threshold of the 21st century, for adopting appropriate planning and modern ideas in shaping up recreation-oriented infrastructure to meet the demands of the fast growing population of the city.

Body to probe DU incidents

By DU Correspondent

A 10-member committee has been formed to probe the untoward incidents that took place on the Dhaka university campus on Wednesday and Thursday.

The committee was formed at a meeting of the university authorities yesterday with Vice-Chancellor Prof A K Azad Chowdhury in the chair, said a DU press release.

Syndicate member Mohammad Ali is the convenor of the probe body while university Proctor Prof A K M Nurun Nabi will act as member-secretary.

The other members of the committee are Prof Abdul Moin Chowdhury, Prof RIM Aminur Rasheed, DU Teachers Association president Prof A F M Yusuf Haider, Advocate A F M Mesbah Uddin, Dean of the Social Science Faculty Prof M Asaduzzaman, Dean of the Business Studies Faculty Prof. Abdul Hassem, DU Registrar Muhammad Selim and Controller of the Examinations Shah M Habibur Rahman.

The committee has been asked to identify the persons responsible for the incidents and submit report with recommendations for action, the press release added.

Peace precondition for democracy: PM

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the process of development and practice of democracy cannot continue in the country unless peace is maintained.

"I seek co-operation from all of you to maintain peace in the country. Without peace, democracy can not function and development can not take place... Our plan is to build a prosperous Bangladesh, free of poverty and hunger, in the new century... A national consensus is a must to achieve the goal," Hasina told a reception accorded to her on her winning the Unesco peace prize for the CHT peace accord.

A 'national committee' comprising noted intellectuals and professionals organised the reception at the Ramna *Batanull* in the city. It was attended by selected guests.

"Winning the peace prize is not an honour for me personally. It is an honour for the whole nation. The credit goes to all who contributed to the restoration of peace in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)." In this context, she mentioned the role of the CHT people who "reposed their confidence" in her and signed the peace treaty.

As the prime minister reached the spot minutes past

5pm, a popular Tagore song -- *Barisho Dhara Bohey Shantiro Neer* -- was played. After recitations from the holy books, a 'peace song' was sung in chorus. Two more popular songs that inspired freedom fighters during the Liberation War were also rendered under the guidance of noted music director Samar Das.

The function was very disciplined under tight security cover. Only invited guests were allowed to attend. Their invitation cards were checked by security men. The huge podium was colourfully decorated with portraits of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Sheikh Hasina.

Ministers, MPs, leaders of ruling Awami League, vice-chancellors of universities, noted poets, literateurs, journalists, doctors, engineers, diplomats and leaders of different professional bodies attended the reception.

National Professor Kabir Chowdhury, who chaired the function, presented Sheikh Hasina a painting by Kaiyumm Choudhury while Prof. Zillur Rahman Siddiqui read the citation.

Actress Sara Zaker read out a message from Sufia Kamal as

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Wife and two children of Afsar, who was held by mistake. —Star photo

Afsar held by mistake yet to be freed

By Staff Correspondent

Badda police has finally admitted that Afsar Ali, a mason, was mistakenly arrested on charge of involvement in planting of bombs in two city mosques and an anti-tank mine at the Janakantha office recently.

"We have failed to prove the allegations against him," the OC of Badda thana said yesterday.

Asked if they would pay compensation to the victim for their mistake, the OC, Ashraf-ur-Islam, replied in the negative. "It was a mistake of the source," he added.

No action has been initiated against the 'source' for the mistake. His identity was not revealed.

"We have taken necessary steps for Afsar Ali's release from the central jail at the earliest," the OC said.

Afsar Ali was arrested from Badda area in place of Afsar Ali Mollah, identified by police as a supporter of Jamaat-e-Islami, who switched allegiance to BNP recently.

Meanwhile, local people met the MP from the area and also brought out a procession demanding his release, this correspondent was told during a visit to the area yesterday.

Abdul Karim, a member of the local Union Parishad, said,

We know Afsar Ali for many years. He is a good man and is not involved in any destructive activities."

For more than 10 years, Afsar worked as a helper to a cook known in the area as Rafiq Baburchi. "He (Afsar) never had any link with political parties and their activities. He also used to work as day labourer when there was no cooking job", Rafiq Baburchi told this correspondent.

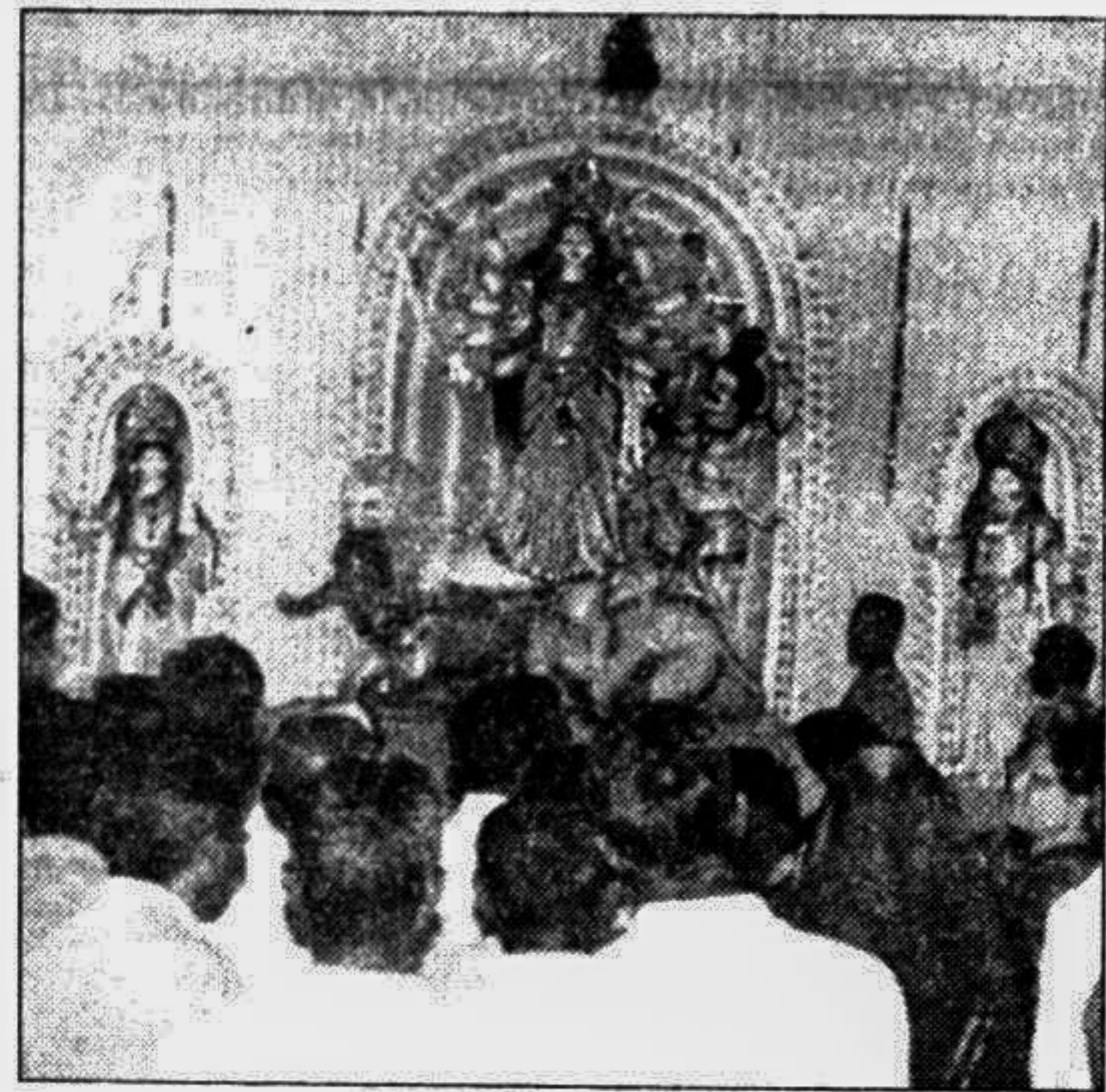
Afsar's wife said her husband is the only bread earner for their four-member family.

The victim's father Atiqullah said when police has come to know that the allegations against his son are false, why he is yet to be set free.

Low formed over Bay

A well-marked low has been formed over the east-central Bay and adjoining south Bay, reports UNB.

It is likely to intensify further and move initially in a northwesterly direction, said a message of the Storm Warning Centre of Bangladesh Meteorological Department yesterday afternoon.



Hindu devotees at a puja mandap in the city yesterday. —Star photo

JS body on agriculture Agenda dropped, experts asked to leave meeting

By Reaz Ahmad

Experts invited to attend a parliamentary standing committee meeting on Tuesday were asked to leave the meeting amidst chaos soon after it began, participants alleged.

Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture Dr TIM Fazle Rabbi invited four experts including a member of the Agriculture Commission for discussion on higher education in agriculture. But within 10 minutes of commencement of the meeting, three experts were told that their presence was no more required as the agenda was dropped abruptly. Another expert was not present because of illness.

This followed an objection from the agriculture minister about the presence of one of the experts, who had lodged case against this ministry in the past, sources concerned said.

The minister, Motia Chowdhury, however told The Daily Star that the agenda was not dropped, rather it was deferred and a meeting of the same committee is due on October 24. She declined to comment on alleged chaos in the meeting.

The meeting was convened amidst growing protest against conversion of agriculture colleges into science and technology universities.

The experts later said that dropping of a set agenda was something 'unprecedented' in case of parliamentary committee meetings. They are former DC of Bangladesh Jute Research Institute Dr Mosharraf Hossain, member of the Agriculture Commission Dr Shahidul Islam and former director of Bangladesh Sugarcane Research Institute Md Yasin Ali.

at the committee meeting had also vainly insisted on not dropping the agenda on such an important issue like agricultural education.

But the committee chairman later told this correspondent that the situation went out of hand and he had to drop agricultural education from the day's agenda. There were discussions on other issues instead, he added.

Mentionably, out of three agricultural colleges in the country, the government has already converted the one in Dinajpur into a science and technology university and the process is on for conversion another at Patuakhali.

Six alleged dacoits held in city

Tejgaon police have arrested six alleged dacoits from Mirpur Mazar Road and recovered looted money, valuables and a microbus from their possession, reports BSS.

A team of Tejgaon police chased the dacoits in front of the prime minister's relief godown and arrested them at midnight Friday night.

The dacoits went to the spot by a microbus and started looting money and belongings of the passengers of an auto-rickshaw.

Join oust-govt movement, Khaleda asks partymen

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday said that the Awami League government, having lost the people's support, has now chosen the path of 'killing and repression' on opposition to curb the one-point movement.

She said that the government will have to bear the consequence of its repressive measures and asked her party leaders and activists to join the 'oust-government movement'.

Addressing a group of Gaibandha district unit leaders, who were released on bail recently, at her 29 Minto Road office, she said, "now we cannot look back, because the one-point movement has already gripped the country."

BNP central leaders Alamgir Kabir, MP, Khalequzzaman Khan Dudu, Alimuzzaman Khan Babu, Shah Badrul Islam, Hasan Ali Sarkar, Masudunnabi Tutul, student leaders Farhad Alam, Mizanur Rahman and others were present.

BNP rally in city tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

BNP will hold a rally at Paltan Maidan in the city at 3:30 pm tomorrow protesting what it said the government conspiracy to implicate party leader Tariqul Islam in Udichi murder case.

A procession will also be brought out after the rally, said a press release.

Another press release said a joint meeting of BNP's joint secretaries general, presidents and general secretaries of its front organisations and city BNP convenors and joint convenors will be held at 11 am tomorrow at party's central office at Nayapaltan.

Fake notes

From page 1

squad arrested Helal from inside a drug shop at Saat Masjid Road under Mohammampur thana on Thursday and recovered Tk. 200 Tk. 500 taka fake notes from him.

On the basis of Helal's information, the police team arrested Jamil from a building at Monweswar Road in Jigatola. Computer, printer, photostat machine and papers with image of fake notes were also recovered from Jamil. Police said that Jamil was a diploma-holder in computer technology.

Police later raided the house of Zaman in the same area and recovered colour printer, cutting machine and other materials used for preparing fake Bangladeshi and Indian currency.

Transport strike in southern dists continues

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Oct 15: Transport strike in different routes of the southern districts continued for the fifth day today, causing immense sufferings to the people.

The transport strike began on October 10 following a clash between the transport workers of Faridpur and Madaripur districts. At least 10 workers were injured in the clash.

The officials of the two districts held several meetings with the feuding groups but failed to resolve the dispute.

BETA to launch campaign against unfair means in public exams

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh Federation of Teachers' Association (BETA) has decided to launch a campaign across the country to create awareness among all to check adoption of unfair means in public examinations.

A press release of BETA here yesterday said that it had decided to launch the campaign prior to the next SSC, HSC and Degree examinations and involve teachers, guardians, administrators and the patrons of education in the campaign.

Apart from that, the BETA is planning to organise a national roundtable conference in Dhaka to be participated by eminent educationists, professionals and people from different sections of the society.

Later, it would organise seminars at district and divisional levels in accordance with the draft proposal to be prepared from the roundtable conference. Initiatives will be taken to co-ordinate the opinions of the participants at the seminars and workshops for checking adoption of unfair means.

According to a press release signed by BETA general secretary, Principal Kazi Faruq Ahmed, the association has taken up a project for preserving the history of the country's teachers' movements in the last 50 years.

Loadshedding

From page 1

Rouzan power plants remained closed due to mechanical problems, the sources said.

Almost half of the power generated in the country is now being supplied to the DESA areas. The total load shedding in the country was above 250 megawatt yesterday.

No headway yet in finding firearms, wealth of Shikdar

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Oct 15: Police are yet to track down huge illegal firearms and ammunition belonging to Ershad Shikdar and his arrested accomplices.

They also have not made any headway in finding out the wealth of Shikdar although the 10th day of the 32-day remand passed today. The notorious crime lord was taken on remand on October 6 in connection with five murder cases.

Only some documents relating to his bank accounts have so far been seized, which according to legal experts are not enough to trace his wealth.

According to judicial confession of his bodyguard Noor-e-Alam, Shikdar and his gangsters have had more than 200 firearms in the possession.

However, Khulna Metropolitan Police authorities said some clues to murders Shikdar had committed in the last 10 years or so have been found during the interrogation. They said these were enough to frame murder charges against Ershad Shikdar.

A KMP official said today Shikdar would be making judicial confession on October 19 in connection with Teko Aziz and Zainal murder cases.

On Thursday, Ershad expressed his intention to run for the next parliamentary election from Khulna-4 constituency against Whip Mostafa Rashidi Shuja after getting released.

"If not released, then I will contest from jail to become an MP from Khulna-4 seat," he said to police.

Police Commissioner M Anwarul Iqbal told The Daily Star that progress made so far by the interrogation team during grilling of Shikdar and his arrested accomplices was reviewed today to submit a preliminary report to the Police Headquarters in Dhaka.

Meanwhile, interrogators quoted Ershad Shikdar to have asked his second wife Shova on Thursday to leave his house 'Swarnakomal' immediately and go to her father's house.

"She is an unlucky woman in my life and I don't have any soft corner in my heart for her," he said.

A source in the KMP said that Shikdar is getting annoyed with the presence of Shova in 'Swarnakomal' and absence of his first wife Khodeja there.

"Khodeja is a pious woman who loves me very much. I want her in the house no matter I live or die," he said to the investigators.

Shikdar also requested police to arrange a meeting with Khodeja and his youngest daughter.

15 shanties gutted at Ctg

CHITTAGONG, Oct 15: At least 15 shanties were gutted in a fire at a slum near Hotel Agrabad here on Thursday, reports UNB.

Fire Service sources said the fire originated from a kitchen at about 3:35 pm and engulfed the slum.

Ctg port

From page 1

The equipment included four forklifts, 10 prime-overs and 24 chassis, he said.

These private equipment of QC Shipping Agency owned by BNP MP Salauddin Kader Chowdhury were allowed to operate in the face of resistance from the port's CBA leaders and other dock union bodies. The port workers agitated against any move for privatisation.

World Food Day '99

Today is 16 October. This day is being observed jointly organised by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the Ministry of Agriculture.

Theme of this year

"Youth Against Hunger"

Programme on the occasion of World Food Day '99

Time Programme

08:00 am Rally.

10:00 am Seminar on "Youth Against Hunger" at BARC Auditorium.

02:30 pm Inauguration of Food Exhibition at Krishibeed Institution, Bangladesh, Farmgate, Dhaka (16-18 October).

05:00 pm Presentation of 'Gambhira' songs at Central Shaheed Minar.

* Special programme at 2:30 pm and 8:30 pm in Bangladesh Betar and at 5:25 pm in Bangladesh Television & also "TeleFood Programme" on 15 & 17 October.

* Publication of special supplement in the national dailies.

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