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3rd Millennium

75
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PM leaves for Australia tonight

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina leaves Dhaka tonight for Australia on a 5-day official visit, reports UNB.

"I look forward to Sheikh Hasina's visit as an opportunity to enhance Australia's ties with Bangladesh and to discuss current regional issues," said Australian Prime Minister John Howard in a statement yesterday.

Hasina is the first head of government of Bangladesh to undertake a bilateral trip to the Pacific nation at the invitation of the Australian Prime Minister. Trade and investment issues are likely to dominate her official talks with the Australian prime minister.

Howard said: "There are good opportunities now for both Australian and Bangladeshi exporters to expand their markets in each other's country and to

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Generals Smother Democracy in Pakistan, Again

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Prayer Timings

October 17		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4:30	5:00
Jorh	12:45	1:20
Asr	4:10	4:25
Maghrub	5:40	5:43
Esha	7:45	8:15

Source: Islamic Foundation

Toxic vetch being sold as lentil

Imported from Australia, vetch can impair eyesight, affect human tissues

By Staff Correspondent

Toxicity in 'vetch', imported from Australia and marketed in the country as lentil for human consumption, can impair eyesight and affect human tissues, says UNB.

According to study reports in many countries including Australia and Sri Lanka, one-week-old chickens, when fed on vetch grains, died by the end of the next week.

"It is toxic even for animals", officials of the Institute for Development Policy Analysis and Advocacy (IDPAA), a subsidiary of a local NGO, Proshika, said at a press conference in the city quoting the report.

As per the reports, only vetch plants can be safely used as fodder, they told newsmen.

They also demanded an immediate ban on import of the item, its withdrawal from the

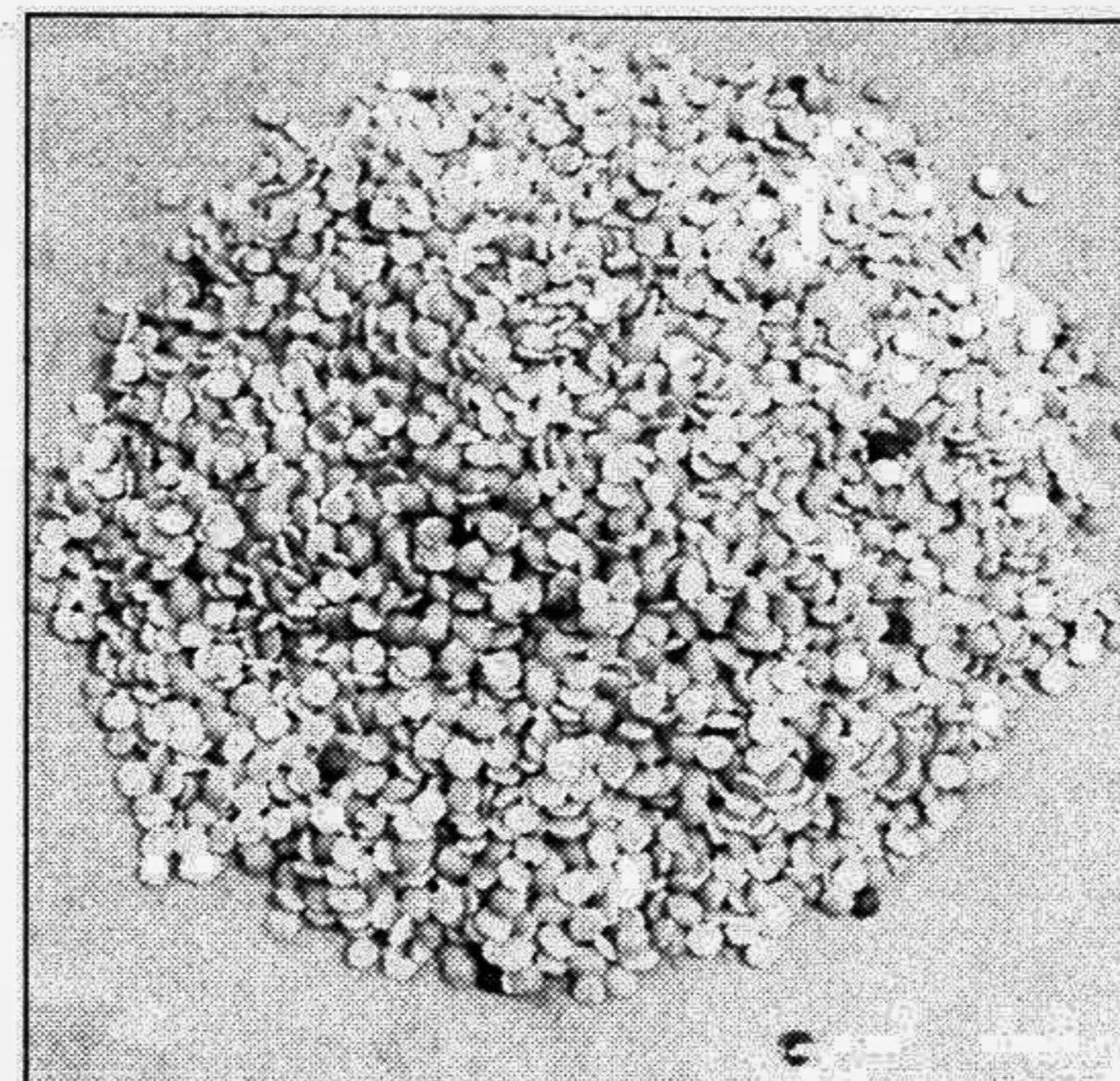
market and action against the importers for the sake of public interest.

Huge quantity of the item has been imported and marketed throughout the country for a long time, they said.

Presenting detailed reports on test results in different countries, Deputy Director of Proshika, Omar Tareq Chowdhury said the businessmen concerned in Bangladesh and Australia are equally responsible for import of the toxic item. "We demand action against the businessmen and the officials in Bangladesh who allowed it".

They also demanded an immediate announcement from the Australian government that vetch would no more be exported. They named two Australian companies — TJ Teague (SA) Ltd. and Societa Cofica Ltd.

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Sample of vetch collected from a local market. — Star photo

Funds constraint Project for lead-free fuel uncertain

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, Oct 16: Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation's proposed project to set up a 'lead-separator unit' at the Eastern Refinery to supply lead-free fuel for motorised vehicles has become uncertain due to lack of funds, sources said.

The 100 million US dollar project was prepared against the backdrop of government's decision to market lead-free fuel to reduce air pollution. The project was included in the Fifth Five Year Plan.

In the absence of a lead separator at the refinery, petrol and octane are blended with unleaded motor spirit during processing of crude.

BPC however started marketing unleaded motor fuel from last month by blending those with unleaded motor spirit imported from Singapore to reduce the level of air pollution in urban centres, the sources said.

Marketing of unleaded fuel was to begin from July 1 but was

delayed due to delay in import of unleaded motor spirit, they said.

The BPC had planned to import 90,000 tonnes of unleaded motor spirit to meet the requirement for July-December period. A total of 27,000 tonnes have been imported and the rest is in the process, BPC Chairman Anwar Hossain told this correspondent.

He claimed that the BPC supplied motor fuel now is completely unleaded.

70 injured in Dighinala clash

From Our Correspondent

Khagrachhari, Oct 16: At least 70 people were injured, eight of them seriously, in a clash involving tribal people, Bangalee settlers and army personnel in Dighinala thana of the district this afternoon.

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delayed due to delay in import of unleaded motor spirit, they said.

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Opinion poll

Buriganga to be major issue in mayoral polls

By Staff Correspondent

More than 50 per cent of the city dwellers think that saving the river Buriganga would turn out to be a major issue in the next mayoral election, according to an opinion poll.

The poll was sponsored by the Centre for Sustainable Development (CFS) and conducted by two teachers at the North South University. They interviewed 838 people of various occupational groups in the city.

About 94.5 per cent of the respondents said, what the Buriganga is to Dhaka, the Thames is to London and the Nile is to Cairo. An advance copy of his television speech was made available by the United News of India.

For the first time in a decade, the Indian electorate has given a decisive mandate to

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DESA's priority to posh areas

By Staff Correspondent

The Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) gives priority to posh areas like Gulshan, Banani, Dhanmondi and Eskaton over industrial belts in supplying power because of "pressure from higher authorities", said a senior official of DESA.

We always try to maintain uninterrupted power supply to the posh areas because most of the government high-ups live there", the official said requesting anonymity.

We often face pressure from the authorities whenever power supply is disrupted in VIP areas. But hardly any pressure comes if power supply is disrupted in industrial belts in Tongi, Joydevpur, Savar, Demra, Narayanganj and Naogaon, the official said.

There was 148 mw load-shedding in DESA areas yesterday, he said but declined to specify the quantity in different zones. The load-shedding is distributed among the 17 zones under DESA. In the last couple of days, the quantity varied from 5 mw to 9 mw in different zones, the official said. The total requirement for DESA areas was 830 mw yesterday.

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3 more accomplices held

Vajpayee's silence over talks with Pakistan

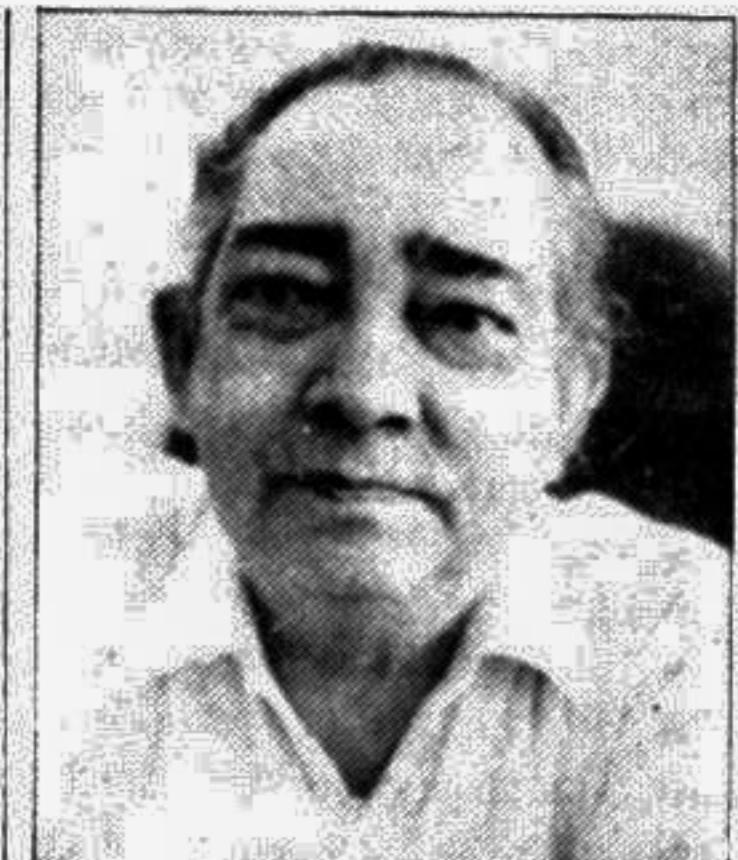
NEW DELHI, Oct 16: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee today announced a wide range of policy initiatives to speed up economic reforms and infrastructure development, but gave no indication he was ready for talks with Pakistan where a military coup has complicated already difficult relations between the two South Asian neighbours, reports AP.

In the past, Vajpayee had said one of his first priorities after assuming office would be to renew with Pakistan, a dialogue that had broken down this summer after a confrontation over the disputed Himalayan territory of Kashmir.

In his first address to the nation after being elected Prime Minister, Vajpayee said his government was committed to giving India a stable and good government that would make the country strong, vigorous and prosperous" in the 21st century. An advance copy of his television speech was made available by the United News of India.

For the first time in a decade, the Indian electorate has given a decisive mandate to

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Anniversary of SM Ali's death today

By Staff Correspondent

Today, the 17th of October, marks the sixth anniversary of death of S M Ali, the founding editor and publisher of The Daily Star.

Syed Mohammad Ali popularly known as S M Ali died at the age of 65 in a Bangkok hospital on this day in 1993 after a prolonged suffering from lung cancer. The late Ali had a celebrated career in journalism as a media and communication professional.

He held key positions in newspapers and other media organisations in South-East Asia. He served as managing editor of the Bangkok Post, managing editor of the Hong Kong Standard, executive director of Press Foundation of Asia and Unesco communication advisor for Asia and the Pacific.

He founded The Daily Star in January, 1991.

Boat capsizes: 9 drown in Chalan Beel

NATORE, Oct 16: At least nine passengers drowned and seven others remained missing after an engine boat capsized in Chalan Beel in Shingra thana on Thursday, according to a delayed report received here today, reports UNB.

Police quoting survivors said the Dahlia-bound engine boat from Bildohor with about 50 passengers, was caught in a storm and sank in the Beel when it reached Kushabari area.

Local people and police recovered the bodies of nine senior officials of the 25-member interrogation team.

Earlier, Shikdar said that he did not know Noor-e-Alam.

Police arrested three more armed cadres of Shikdar from Major in Madaripur district Friday night.

They have been identified as Moshraf Hossain, Mosha, Jahan and Babul.

Police believe that information about the murder of ward commissioner and AL leader Mosleminuddin Khan could be collected from the three armed cadres.

Moslem was killed on February 25, 1995. A case was lodged with Khulna thana on the following day accusing 14 people. Shikdar was the principal accused in the case.

But the IO of the case had submitted a charge sheet dropping the names of ten of the accused including Shikdar.

On February 28 this year, the remaining four were convicted

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US team arrives Oct 29 to scrutinise WRIP

By Sharier Khan

Representatives of the recently appointed American consultant firm, Parsons, are expected to arrive in the city on October 29 to scrutinise the controversial Western Region Integrated Project (WRIP) being pursued by US company Unocal and supervise follow-up action of the government, official sources said.

The government has already prepared necessary documents which include a report by Petrobangla on the outcome of negotiations and disputed issues of the 700 million dollar project.

The WRIP seeks to develop Shahbazpur Gasfield in Bhola, lay a 150 km pipeline and set up four power plants in Gopalganj-Khulna region.

In its report, Petrobangla

pointed out that WRIP was passing all the risk factors on to the Bangladesh government. It suggested that as an investor, Unocal must take all the risks including gas supply risk.

Petrobangla expressed its reservations about the tariff structure and the diameter of the 150 km pipeline.

It further suggested that GTCL, which is currently enjoying monopoly in gas transmission in the country, should be given a carried interest of 20 per cent as it was partially losing its monopoly.

Earlier, during negotiations between Petrobangla and Unocal, the US company had

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the pipeline would not exceed that applicable to a 16-inch diameter pipeline. It may build a 24-inch pipeline or 20-inch pipeline, but the tariff would be calculated against a 16-inch pipeline, clarified one source.

Petrobangla asserted that Gas Transmission Company Ltd (GTCL) of Bangladesh should be designated as a joint operator with Unocal in the pipeline scheme under WRIP.

It further suggested that GTCL, which is currently enjoying monopoly in gas transmission in the country, should be given a carried interest of 20 per cent as it was partially losing its monopoly.

Earlier, during negotiations between Petrobangla and Unocal, the US company had

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whose sudden & premature demise will certainly be missed dearly by all.

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RANGS GROUP

EU move to halt aid to Pakistan US hints at accepting a new civilian govt without Sharif

WASHINGTON, Oct 16: The United States signalled on Friday that it could accept a new civilian government in Pakistan that did not include ousted Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who was toppled in a bloodless military coup on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

Asked if he wanted Sharif reinstated, President Bill Clinton told Reuters the United States wanted a restoration of civilian government in the South Asian Country but pointedly did not address whether this should include Sharif.

"As a matter of principle, the United States, any country, never attempts to select the leaders for any other country ... the people are supposed to do that, not us," Clinton said in a brief interview after a White House event on youth violence.

The position contrasted sharply with an intense and ultimately successful US effort to

restore former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide after a 1991 coup.

Also on Friday, the State Department said the United States had halted all but a tiny slice of aid to Pakistan in response to the military takeover — a largely symbolic move because most aid had been cut off under sanctions dating back to 1990. State Department spokesman James Foley said Washington was undecided on whether to oppose International Monetary Fund loans.

Clinton's comments followed remarks by another