



PM in Sydney:
Official talks
tomorrow

SYDNEY, Oct 18: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina flew in here today to begin a five-day tour with a mission to expand economic ties with Australia, reports UNB.

Australian Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs Philip Ruddock MP received Sheikh Hasina on her arrival at the Sydney Kingsford Smith International Airport on the first-ever bilateral visit to the continental country by a head of government of Bangladesh.

Dozens of Bangladeshi expatriates chanted slogans welcoming the Prime Minister as the aircraft of Biman Bangladesh airlines landed at the airport at around 6:45 pm (local time).

The main agenda of the Prime Minister's visit is to expand trade and investment between Dhaka and Canberra. See Page 11 Col 4

Election issues

Opposition did not turn up for talks with EC

By Staff Correspondent

Mainstream opposition parties including BNP did not turn up yesterday to discuss matters relating to the City Corporations and Upazila Parishad polls with the Election Commission.

Leaders of two political parties having representation in the government headed by Sheikh Hasina, however, attended the meeting.

The EC had earlier invited leaders of the mainstream political parties to exchange views on various aspects relating to the up-coming elections of the city corporations and upazila bodies. BNP, Jatiya Party led by H M Ershad, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote declined the offer for talks.

However, the Jatiya Party led by Communication Minister Anwar Hossain Moni and the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal of Fisheries Minister A S M Abdur Rab yesterday met the Election Commission.

Members of the two delegations separately told the Com-

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Tangail-8 bypolls

Nomination papers of 33 valid

From Our Correspondent

TANGAIL, Oct 18: Nomination papers of 33 candidates out of 35 filed for Tangail-8 by election were declared valid today.

The nomination papers of two independent candidates — SM Enayet Karim and Md Ali Azgar — were found invalid during scrutiny and cancelled, said an EC official.

Of the 33 candidates, 25 are independent, including the main contender expelled Awami League leader Abdul Kader Siddiqui Bir Uttam.

Shakhat Momen Shahjahan is contesting for ruling Awami League while Kazi Ashraf Siddiqui and Mirza Aminuzzaman for Jatiya Party (Ershad), and ASM Rafiqul Islam Khan for JP (Mizan-Manjul).

Earlier, on Sunday, the last day for submitting nominations, 35 candidates, including two women, deposited their nomination papers for the constituency covering Bashail and Sakhipur.

The last date for withdrawal of candidature is October 26.

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by Praful Bidwai
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Prayer Timings

October 19

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4:30	5:00
Jorh	12:45	1:20
Asr	4:10	4:25
Maghrab	5:38	5:42
Esha	7:45	8:15

Source: Islamic Foundation

www.dailystarnews.com

DAKKA TUESDAY OCTOBER 19, 1999

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days to
3rd Millennium

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RAJAB 8, 1420 HIJRI

16 PAGES PRICE: Taka 6.00

Generals order troops pullout from border C'wealth suspends Pakistan

LONDON, Oct 18: Pakistan was suspended from the Commonwealth today and barred from the group's heads of government meeting in South Africa next month because of last week's military coup, reports Reuters.

In a statement released at the end of talks in London, ministers from the eight-national Commonwealth Action Group said they "unanimously condemned the unconstitutional overthrow of the democratically elected government of Pakistan."

The group has decided therefore that the Pakistan military regime should forthwith be suspended from the councils of the Commonwealth, including the forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, pending the

restoration of democracy in the country," it said.

The Commonwealth ministers also called on the military regime in Islamabad to announce immediately a timeframe for the restoration of democracy. It agreed to send a mission to meet the Pakistani regime, which will consist of ministers from Canada, Barbados, Ghana and Malaysia.

Meanwhile, Pakistan began pulling troops away from its tense border with India today, one day after new military ruler General Pervez Musharraf promised a "unilateral" military de-escalation, army officials in Islamabad said.

The pullback was dismissed by New Delhi, which stepped up accusations that Islamabad was behind "cross-border terrorism".

The United States said it welcomed the troop pullback

Pakistani officials said the troops were being pulled back only from the international border and not from the Line of Control dividing disputed Kashmir.

"Orders have been issued and the return of forces that had been moved to borders in the last few months has already started this morning," spokesman Brigadier Rashid Qureshi said.

India shrugged off the pullback.

"It is imperative that Pakistan should cease its sponsorship of cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and elsewhere in India," Indian foreign ministry spokesman Raminder Singh Jassal said in a statement.

A lot of what he said on the substance, including the conciliatory tone he took toward India. See Page 11 Col 5

Storm triggers countrywide rain

By Special Correspondent

The country experienced intermittent rainfall since Sunday in the wake of a cyclonic storm that made a "landfall" over the Indian state of Orissa early yesterday.

A low forming in the West Central Bay last week developed into a cyclonic storm having a gust of 85 kph and maintained its steady course towards the north-west. It started lashing the Orissa coast late Sunday evening and "completed the landfall at 3 am yesterday" a senior weatherman said.

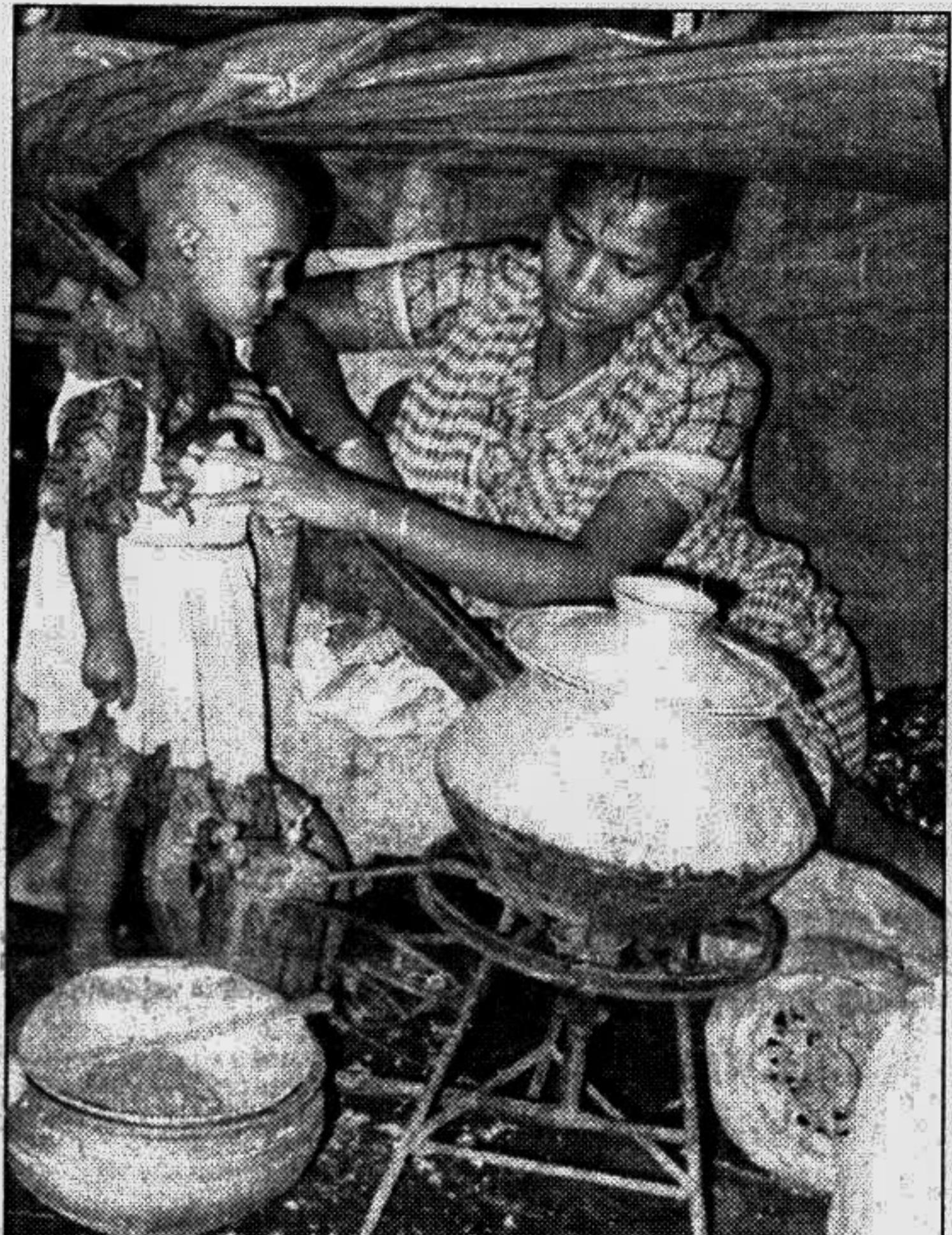
The cyclonic storm triggered heavy to moderate rainfall in the country throughout yesterday as it turned into a land depression over Orissa, West Bengal and Bihar in India, making a north-easterly move. Met Office said last night.

Under its influence, rains are likely today with a lesser intensity as the land depression gradually weakens.

The rainfall totalling 99 mm from 6 pm Sunday to 6 pm yesterday in Dhaka disrupted normal life. It particularly affected the poor who sleep on pavements and made life difficult for vendors and day labourers.

During the same period the

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A destitute family takes shelter under a make-shift 'polythene tent' during day-long drizzle yesterday. — Star photo

Meeting with Khaleda German MPs told of AL's 'misrule'

By Staff Correspondent

The visiting German Parliamentary Delegation yesterday evening called on the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia and discussed with her the current political, economic and parliamentary issues of Bangladesh.

Brigitte Adel, headed the 5-member delegation.

Khaleda Zia briefed the visiting delegation on the issues and said that the ruling Awami League, which had once introduced one-party BKSAL rule, had again resorted to undemocratic and anti-people activities.

She said that although the AL spoke of democracy, in actuality the party-government was engaged in various anti-democracy activities. The ruling party had already snatched people's fundamental and democratic rights and had been taking important decisions without any discussion with opposition parties in parliament, she added.

The opposition leader said the government had signed important treaties and agreements with foreign countries without

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Tk 3331 crore agri loan for current fiscal

The government will disburse Tk 3,331 crore as agricultural loan during the current fiscal, which is Tk 326 crore higher than actual disbursement last year, reports UNB.

This was disclosed yesterday at the first meeting of the national committee to monitor and review agricultural loan.

Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria presided over the meeting at the Finance Ministry.

Alternate president of the committee, Agriculture Minister Begum Motia Chowdhury was present.

The Cabinet Division formed the committee headed by the Finance Minister on October 6.

During the last fiscal year (1998-99) Tk 3,005 crore was disbursed as agricultural loan against a recovery of Tk 1,996

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Power supply situation worsens

By Staff Correspondent

Power supply situation in the country worsened yesterday as a number of units in major power plants remained closed due to mechanical problems, according to PDB sources.

But they declined to specify the quantity of load shedding in the country yesterday.

The control room at Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESAI) office however said that Dhaka and its adjacent areas had a deficit of 118 mw power.

In the city, many areas including Gulshan, New Market, Azimpur, Shahbagh, Faringate, New Elephant Road, Kalabagan, Mogh Bazar and Malibagh area experienced load shedding.

Some adjacent areas including Fatullah, Postgola, Jatrabari, Demra, Amin Bazar, Tongi and Joydebpur also came under load shedding yesterday.

A PDB source said power generation in nine units remained suspended since 9 am yesterday. These are Ghorashal-3, Shikhalbari thermal plants, Shiddharpur-4, Rouzan-2, Ashuganj Gas Turbine-2, Haripur-2, Fenchuganj Gas Turbine-1,2 and the thermal plant.

Ghorashal-6 and Ashuganj-4 units were generating less power than usual. Power supply through the Ashuganj-Comilla 230 KV line was disrupted.

The bodies were dumped into the killing spot near the old water tank in the Railway colony area and killed one by one. They were strangled and then beaten with heavy stones before being shot dead.

Shikdar's mother-in-law Farida was present during his confession to the murder of five smugglers. She was taken to the interrogation cell to weaken his mental stamina and make him confess the crimes, said a KMP

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16 killed as cyclone hits Orissa

paralysing road and rail transport as well as communications.

A national highway linking Calcutta with the southern city of Madras, which runs through the region, was blocked by uprooted trees.

Gamang said he had asked the prime minister for help from the Indian army and paramilitary forces to rescue those stranded along the coast.

Six of those deaths occurred in Orissa's Ganjam district and three people were seriously injured when a tree collapsed on them, he said.

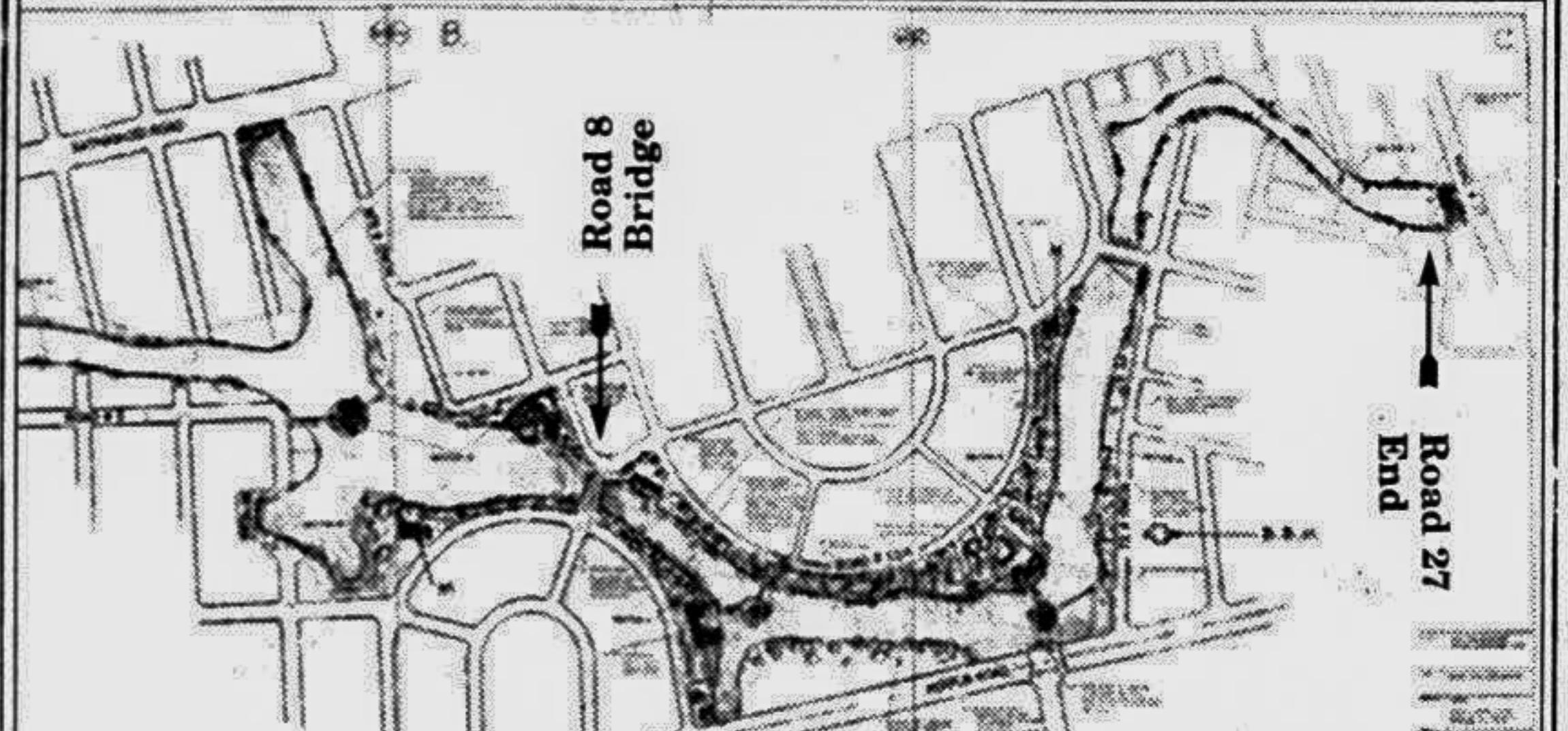
Several houses were damaged in Berhampur city. A cyclone warning system located near the port town of Gopalpur had forecast heavy rains for the next two days.

The cyclone also brought torrential rains to neighbouring Andhra Pradesh state.

In Orissa, the authorities shifted 4,000 villagers to safer places Sunday. Many were housed in state-owned schools. Fishermen had been warned not to venture into the choppy sea.

During the last fiscal year (1998-99) Tk 3,005 crore was disbursed as agricultural loan against a recovery of Tk 1,996

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Dhanmandi lake polluted again

By Staff Correspondent

A large stretch of Dhanmandi lake has become polluted again as an embankment at Road-32, separating the undeveloped western part and the re-excavated eastern part, gave in recently due to rise in water level.

Clean water in the eastern part from Road-32 bridge to the bridge at Road-8 has been polluted by sludge and other waste pouring in from the western part.

Eastern part of the lake was re-excavated recently under the Dhanmandi lake development project. But the western part, from Road-27 to Road-32 bridge, still remains untouched due to encroachments and refusal of residents to shift drains and sewerage lines.

Project sources said once it is completed, polluted water is to be pumped out and replaced with fresh water.

Meanwhile, water in the re-excavated stretch of the lake is also being polluted gradually in the absence of monitoring by the authorities. As usual, vehicle washing, bathing and dumping of waste by clinics and other establishments are continuing. Colour of the water is fast changing as a result.

Project officials said they would have to treat the water with lime to make it pollution-free.

and other pledges made in a speech by Musharraf on Sunday to restore democratic rule but lamented that no time frame was set.

"We would hope that sooner — and much sooner than later — that there would be a fulfillment of the pledge to return to democratic rule," US Defence Secretary William Cohen said in Bahrain during a Middle East tour.

US President Bill Clinton said today he was pleased by the "conciliatory tone" Pakistan's new military ruler had toward India but disappointed that Gen. Musharraf set no timetable for a return to democracy.

Import of vetch, a grain so far marketed in the country as lentil, was banned for toxicity which impairs eyesight, affects human tissues and can even cause latherism.

42 tonnes now held up at Ctg port

1100 MTs of vetch imported in last four months

Star Report

The Chittagong Customs has stopped delivery of 42 tonnes of imported vetch worth about Tk 9 lakh.

The delivery was stopped soon after the government banned import of the toxic item on Sunday. Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong Customs Al-amin Pramanik told The Daily Star Bureau Chief in Chittagong yesterday.

The consignment was imported from Australia by Faruq Traders of Munshiganj, Dhaka.

Asked whether the quantity now in the market will be withdrawn, one source said, "The government is seriously considering the matter. A decision will be taken after the level of toxicity is ascertained."

The ministry has also re-

quested the Australian embassy here to furnish information regarding toxicity in vetch and whether it is a food item or a fodder.

It has also asked for a list of vetch exporters in Australia, the sources said.