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'3500 auto-rickshaws imported defying ban'

Some 3500 autorickshaws have been imported through a nationalised commercial bank defying a ban imposed to prevent air pollution by their toxic exhausts, says a donor agency official, reports UNB. The vehicles were imported through the World Bank suggested pulling out all the three-wheelers from the city streets within next four years time, Prof Feroz Faruqui, a consultant for the World Bank, told a roundtable discussion in the city yesterday. Chartered Institute of Transport (CIT), Bangladesh, organised the roundtable on "Transportation" at Railway Rest House. Prof Feroz pointed out that although issuance of rickshaw licence had been stopped since 1992, everyday new rickshaws, including migrated ones from all over the country, are coming to the capital city. He said seven million people of the city travel about 115 million kilometers by rickshaw a day. Street hawkers, roadside shopkeepers, slums on the roads, greedy house-owners all are occupying the roads squeezing the road space to its minimum. However, he said, "banning meetings on the roads have given us a sigh of relief at long last." Rural-to-urban migration to

Dhaka city is alarming, and absolutely without any plans, that simply swelling the number of slum dwellers and destitutes, he said. He said that there were 9.30 million population in Dhaka city in 1997 that would rise to 11 million by year 2000 and to 11 million by 2010. The World Bank consultant said about a million people daily commute and absolutely depend on the capital. There are about one million rickshaw-pullers with about 6,00,000 rickshaws plying in the city, about 65 per cent of them without licence or with forged licences. After a lot of turmoil for several years, Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) has gained a significant amount of public confidence in recent times, especially after the privatisation call and introduction of premium bus service, he said. BRTC chairman M Azmal Chowdhury said the corporation started its journey in 1961 with 1300 buses that came down to 220 and had been incurring an annual loss of Tk 20 million until 1994. He said it could not even pay the salaries of its workmen for about four years and had a significant amount of loan. But, the state transport rebounded last year, earning an operating profit of Tk 40 million.

The first step of this success was to introduce sub-contracting the operations of its service, he told the meeting. The idea came from only one or two persons, but it should be institutionalised," he said recommending setting up of a separate ministry for public utilities, including railway, road transport, DESA, WASA. Giving a cue for the handicaps in the present system, the BRTC boss lamented: "I have to invite tenders even for salvaging a troubled vehicle from the road." Prof Feroz suggested that cottage industries should be established in the rural areas to employ people locally and thus to arrest unplanned rural-urban migration that put excessive pressures on the services. "Rickshaws must ply the arterial roads, inner roads and lanes and in no way main roads after initiating adequate numbers of buses," he recommended. He further suggested introducing sufficient single and double-decker buses in the public and private sectors to ease traffic hassles. Director general of CIT, London, Cyril Bleasdale, CIT Bangladesh chairman Rear Admiral M Khan, CIT Bangladesh vice-chairman Air Commodore Moinal Islam were, among others, who also spoke on the occasion.



Durga puja ended yesterday with immersion of the goddess — Star photo

Durga Puja ends

Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of the Hindu Community, ended yesterday with the immersion of Goddess Durga in rivers and ponds across the country, reports UNB. Hundreds of devotees paraded the city streets carrying the images of Goddess Durga before immersion those in the river Buriganga. The biggest Bijoya procession was brought out in the capital from Dhakeswari temple premises. Before the start of the Bijoya procession from the Dhakeswari Temple, State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed said the present government is determined to maintain communal harmony and establish a non-communal society.

Durga Puja President hosts reception

President Shahabuddin Ahmed hosted a reception for the members of the Hindu community at Bangabhaban yesterday on the occasion of Durga Puja, reports BSS. President welcomed the guests and enquired about their welfare. He also exchanged greetings with them. State Minister for Religious Affairs Maulana Nurul Islam, Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Deb Mukharji, Chitra Bhattacharya, MP, Rankrishna Mission chief Swami Akhayananda, Hindu Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad chairman Major-General Fred CR Dutta, political leaders, intellectuals and senior journalists attended the reception.

Khaleda concerned at terrorism at puja mandaps

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has expressed deep concern at the incidents of terrorism at Durga Puja mandaps, toll extortion, damaging of idols and construction of market at temple premises. In a statement yesterday, she said that the unholly activities of the terrorists centering the puja and temples have once again unveiled the naked character of Awami League's misrule. The Leader of the Opposition said terrorists yesterday obstructed the Hindu believers and devotees in their puja and building of idols, damaged idol, extorted toll money from the puja celebration committee and occupied temple's land and built up market there Feni, Manikganj, Faridpur, Tangail, Narsingdhi and Comilla. She said those incidents had not only angered the Hindu believers but also had concerned other people irrespective of religion. Khaleda Zia said the government was yet to take any step against the terrorists. She blamed the terrorists for their unholly activities under the shelter and protection of the government.

Processionists carrying images of Durga clash in city: 5 hurt

At least five people were injured when people from two processions carried images of Durga clashed near the Central Shaheed Minar at about 5:15 pm yesterday. The processionists were heading toward Sadarghat for immersion of the images of Goddess Durga in the river Buriganga. Hospital sources identified the injured as Sankar Biswas, 23, Shyamol, 20, Sribash, 22, Mongol, 23 and Smitu, 22. They clashed following an altercation over who should go first to Sadarghat, sources quoting the injured said. The injured were released after first aid. Further details were not available. The on duty officer at Ramna thana could not confirm the incident till filing of this report last night.

BCL factions clash 30 hurt, 20 shops, houses ransacked in Barisal town

From Staff Correspondent BARISAL, Oct 20: At least 30 people were injured, over 20 houses and shops ransacked, looted and torched when ruling party backed Chhatra League factions clashed at Kaunia in the town this evening. The two BCL factions, one led by BCL cultural secretary Monam, while another by Khokan Suhut were locked in a clash at about 6.45 pm at Kaunia, witnesses said. Series of bombs were exploded, some shots were also fired during one and half hour clash. Police rushed to the spot and fired tear gas shells to control the situation. Additional police force have been deployed to avert further clash. Tense situation is prevailing in the area.

Shikdar confesses killing Munir, Khalid

From Staff Correspondent KHULNA, Oct 20: Ershad Shikdar has confessed that he had masterminded the murder of Awami League leader and businessman Syed Munir Hossain but not Jubo League leader Khalid Hossain. The murder of Khalid Hossain was an accident and I did not want him to die," he was quoted to have told interrogators on Tuesday night. A KMP source quoting Shikdar said that he had called Syed Munir in the ice factory at Skid Ghat and nobody else on the plea of discussing business and lease of Jaikhana ferry-ghat. "It was my plan to kill Munir and dump his dead body into the river as I did in other cases," Ershad said. He became furious seeing Munir accompanied by his younger brother Chayan, Chhatra League leaders Ashit and Ali Akbar Tipu and Jubo League leader Khalid Hossain, he was reported to have said. His armed cadres put off electric lights of the ice factory and started beating Munir, Chayan and Khalid with iron rods and butts of sown-off rifles, Shikdar told police. Meanwhile, CL leaders Ashit and Tipu managed to escape from there and informed Khulna thana police of the incident. Police rushed there and rescued Munir, Chayan and Khalid with severe multiple injuries. Later at midnight Khalid Hossain died at Khulna Sadar hospital. "It was beyond my imagination that Khalid will die. Rather my plan was to 'finish' Syed Munir at any cost as he was my business rival," Ershad said to interrogators. Narrating how he had conducted his illegal business using his armed cadres except Noor-e-Alam during his underground life till his arrest, Shikdar said the death of Jubo League leader Khalid and marriage with Shova, former wife of an Awami League leader, were the causes of 'my fall'. But he did not say anything about the causes of his rise, the KMP source quoting the interrogators said. Earlier on October 10, Ershad denied his involvement in the murder of Khalid Hossain. "I was in India for medical treatment when Khalid was killed in the armed attack, Ershad said to interrogators on October 10 showing a forged medical certificate. Meanwhile, Kotwali thana police today arrested Siddique Rahman (40), president of 'Ershad Mukti Andolan'. Police arrested him while he was trying to organise a procession at Skid Ghat at noon demanding release of Ershad and rehabilitation of evicted dwellers of railway land.

Hony Doctor of Laws conferred on Hasina

CANBERRA, Oct 20: The Australian National University today conferred on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina the degree of Doctor of Laws at a special congregation saying "she has been courageous in Opposition and an effective reformer in Government", reports BSS. "She is a visionary who has achieved balance in implementing far-reaching reforms whilst retaining and nurturing traditional values in a large and conservative society of nearly 130 million people," the citation of the degree, read out by Vice Chancellor Dr Annabelle Bennett, said. It added: "Often Sheikh Hasina has had to exercise her great political skills in an adverse environment but she does so without sacrificing her principles." Chancellor of the university Prof Peter Baume, amid cheers of a distinguished gathering of intellectual academics, ceremonially conferred the degree on Bangladesh Prime Minister. "I confer upon you the honorary degree of doctorate of laws," he said. In her speech, Sheikh Hasina said, "It is my firm conviction that peace and stability at home and in the region are indispensable for sustainable development." "I would like to assure you that as long as I live I will dedicate myself to the rule of law and democracy and champion the cause of the poor and the distressed and be the voice of the voiceless," she said. Sheikh Hasina said she was accepting the award on behalf of the people of Bangladesh who have "stood by me all along and to whom I owe so much." "This award is not only a tribute to me but a tribute to all my people," she said.

Tk 10 cr anti-venom drug plant lying idle

By staff correspondent The only plant in the country that produces life-saving anti-venom drug (anti-toxin serums) is still lying idle despite an increasing demand for it. An estimated 10,000 incidents of snakebite take place in the country annually. Many of the victims die due to lack of drugs and treatment facilities or late diagnosis. The health ministry is yet to take steps to bring the plant into operation. The Daily Star on August 13 published a report on the potential and the fate of the plant. Despite its trial run and capacity to produce ASVS in large scale (target 25,000 vials yearly) and potential to produce three other anti-poison drugs like anti-diphtheria, anti-rabies and anti tetanus ones, the plant could not go into production. The Tk 10 crore plant is lying unutilised at the Institute of Public Health (IPH). Many of its staff are not getting their salary for over ten months while funds to maintain the plant have almost been exhausted. According to scientists at the plant, drugs produced in it would cost almost half the amount compared to the same drugs now being imported from

US diplomat confirms Clinton's trip to South Asia

NEW DELHI, Oct 20: US President Bill Clinton will visit India early next year even if he does not go to Pakistan, the US ambassador to New Delhi was quoted today as saying, reports AP. "He will certainly come to India," said US Ambassador Richard Celeste during a video dialogue with the Indian American Forum for Political Education in Washington DC on Tuesday. Since the military coup in Pakistan, it was the first statement from a US official that Clinton would be willing to visit India without going to Pakistan, a US ally. However, Celeste did not confirm previously announced plans for Clinton to also visit Bangladesh. He also did not confirm the expected dates for the South Asia visit, which has been tentatively planned for sometime between mid-January and the end of March. Clinton had planned to visit Pakistan and India in 1998, but the trip was postponed when both countries tested nuclear weapons, bringing economic sanctions from the United States, Japan and other nations.

Top alliance leaders meet Jamaat chief

By Staff Correspondent Top leaders of the BNP-led opposition alliance met the Jamaat Ameer yesterday and agreed to take up effective programmes to dislodge the Awami League government from power within quickest possible time. Secretaries general of BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikya Jote and their liaison committee representatives held 80-minute exclusive meeting from 1:15 am with Golam Azam and discussed ways to intensify oust-government movement. Earlier, they met with BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia on Oct 8, JP Chairman HM Ershad on Oct 19. They will meet IOJ chief Azizul Haq on Friday at 9 am. Briefing newsmen after the meeting held at Jamaat central office, Jamaat publicity secretary Abdul Quader Mollah said the opposition parties are determined to topple the AL government from power as soon as possible through mass movement. He said the top leaders of the four parties discussed the future course of action and reiterated its commitment not to participate in any election under the AL government. Now our main demand is to hold parliament election before all other polls. We have also decided to resist the polls if the government tries to hold them without opposition participation," Mollah added. The Jamaat leader said the opposition parties had wanted to allow the AL government to complete its full term, but the anti-state and anti-people activities and subversive policy have forced the parties to launch this oust-government movement before the tenure. Replied to a question, Quader Mollah said the date for holding the proposed summit meeting of the four party chiefs is yet to be finalised. The secretaries general on completion of meetings with party chiefs with sit with the liaison committee to decide the matter, he said. BNP leaders Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, M Shamsul Islam MP and Anwar Zahid, JP leaders Nazim Rahman Manjur, Kazi Firoz Rashid and AIM Golam Mostafa, Jamaat leaders Murtuza Rahman Nizami, Abdul Qader Mollah, Shaikh Ansar Ali and ATM Azharul Islam, and IOJ leaders Fazul Haq Amini, ARM Abdul Matin, Principal Mas-ud-Khan and Abu Bakar Moshuddin participated in the meeting.

Megawati defeated

From page 1 Earlier today, in Habibie's home province of South Sulawesi, 30,000 people burned tires and chanted pro-Habibie slogans in Ujungpandang after they heard that he had left the race. "For the unity of the nation, I call on the people of Indonesia to accept the results of the election," Megawati said in parliament after she joined Wahid and hundreds of other legislators in singing the national anthem following the vote. "Together with Megawati, I celebrate our independence and freedom," said Wahid, 59, better known by his nickname, Gus Dur. The two said they would travel outside parliament together and talk to thousands of fervent Megawati supporters who had gathered at Jakarta's main traffic circle for what they hoped would be a celebration of her victory in the election. Instead, they milled about, some still believing that Megawati had won or would be handed the country's top office by Wahid. Indonesia's powerful military said it would stand behind Wahid, who won the election by a vote of 373-to-313, with five abstentions. A third candidate from a small Muslim party pulled out just before voting started and threw his support behind Wahid. The Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle of Megawati — the popular daughter of Sukarno, Indonesia's founding father — had won the most seats in a parliamentary election in June, the country's freest in 44 years. But no party won a majority. That forced coalition building, and Wahid proved to be more politically savvy than Megawati, a politician not known for her skills as a back room dealmaker. The country's financial markets skyrocketed after Habibie dropped out of the race, then fell sharply when Wahid was elected, with some analysts saying they were concerned about his poor health and lack of specific economic policies.

Sushma won't contest from Bellary again

NEW DELHI, Oct 20: Sushma Swaraj, who gave a tough fight to Sonia Gandhi in Bellary, yesterday said she was not keen on contesting again the seat vacated by the Congress president, reports PTI. I will not contest again from Bellary, I had gone there under special circumstances to fight Sonia Gandhi and not Congress party, BJP leader Swaraj told PTI when asked to comment on Sonia's decision to vacate Bellary seat and retain Amethi. Terming Sonia's decision to resign from Bellary as routine, Swaraj said she had been able to explode the myth that Bellary was the safest constituency for the Congress as it had returned the party in all the Lok Sabha elections so far. Swaraj, who lost to Sonia by over 56,000 votes, said she got lead in two assembly segments than Sonia.

Exercise reduces diabetes risk

CHICAGO, Oct 20: A study of more than 70,000 women found that exercise — even brisk walking — can reduce the risk of developing adult-onset diabetes, reports AP. The study of women participating in the Nurses Health Study found that moderate to vigorous exercise was associated with a 46 per cent lower risk. The researchers were led by Dr Frank B Hu of the Harvard School of Public Health. The study, published in Wednesday's Journal of the American Medical Association, is in line with previous research on both men and women. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise a day. Diabetes occurs when the body is insulin-deficient, becomes impaired in its capacity to use insulin, or both.

Schoolboy shot dead in Munshiganj

MUNSHIGANJ, Oct 20: A schoolboy was gunned down and 10 others were injured in a clash between two rival groups at Solachar under Sadar thana here today, police said, reports BSS. Akhter Hussain, a student of class eight of Bakultala High School and son of Nuruddin Sarder, was killed in the clash. Four of the injured were admitted to Munshiganj Hospital. The clash was a sequel to previous enmity between two rival groups of Mollikandi and Adhara unions, police said. The body of Akhter was sent to Narayanganj Hospital for autopsy. A case has been lodged with Sadar thana.

AL, opposition call meetings at same venue in Ctg today

From Our Correspondent Chittagong, Oct 19: The port city, where both the ruling party and the opposition have to hold a public meeting tomorrow, has become very tense amid blasts in front of the City Corporation building this evening. The opposition party had announced the local Laldighi Maidan as the venue of its proposed public meeting tomorrow afternoon, towards the end of the countrywide dawn to dusk hartal (general strike). Political circles of this port city told The Daily Star that it was a matter of practice that the ruling Awami League Party always chose the same venue and the same time for holding their public meetings as the opposition BNP and Congress programme. This time, too, there was no exception, they complained.

Afsar Ali to be set free

By Staff Correspondent Badda police yesterday asked the Dhaka Central Jail authorities to set free Afsar Ali, mistake'ly arrested and sent to the prison as suspect for planting of grenades in two mosques and an anti-tank mine at Janakantha office about two weeks ago. Asked whether police paid any compensation to the victim for their mistake, causing losses to the daily wage earner, a Badda thana official replied in the negative. There is no provision for paying compensation to the persons arrested on grounds of suspicion under section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure". Afsar Ali, was taken on remand for two days. He was later sent to the Dhaka Central Jail for further investigation. An investigation carried out by the Daily Star revealed that Afsar Ali was mistakenly arrested from Badda area in place of Afsar Ali Mollah. Police also confirmed their mistake. Badda police yesterday claimed to have requested the jail authorities for his release.

A day without loadshedding

By Staff Correspondent The Dhaka Metropolitan area experienced, for a change in several weeks, a loadshedding-free day yesterday after a few weeks. The city has been experiencing prolonged load shedding for the last few weeks ostensibly owing to shortage in power generation. A number of units of the country's major power plants remained closed due to 'mechanical problems' that caused the deficit in power generation. According to the Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA), the city areas had no load shedding yesterday. DESA had been able to maintain an uninterrupted supply of electricity throughout the day. But the areas outside the metropolis had to experience some load shedding due to shortage of power supply from the power development board (PDB). According to DESA sources, the PDB allocated 880 megawatt power for DESA for distribution in Dhaka Metropolitan area and adjacent districts which are also under its jurisdiction. The districts are Narayanganj, Munshiganj, Manikganj and Gazipur. Keeping the metropolis areas out of the sufferings caused by load shedding, the DESA maintained 50 megawatt power shortage in the adjacent areas, the source said. Areas like Savar, Nawabganj, Munshiganj, Mirkadim, Narayanganj and Tongi experienced the load shedding.

Boat capsizes: 3 drown in Santoli beel in Natore

From Our Correspondent RAJSHAHI, Oct 20: Three people drowned and five others were missing when an engine boat capsized in Santoli Beel in Boraiagram thana in Natore district yesterday noon. Sources said, the boat with about 40 passengers on board left Dhanaidaha Bridge for Nagargram. It capsized in the beel due to heavy current and strong wind. Of the dead, two were identified as Shapla, 22, and Hosna, 35, while the identity of a minor girl could not be known. Other passengers managed to swim ashore.

Hartal 5500-strong security net for the city

By Staff Correspondent A total of 5500 police and BDR personnel will be deployed across the city today for maintaining law and order during the opposition-called dawn-to-dusk hartal, said official sources. Police were conducting search on persons and vehicles in different areas in the city to prevent supply of home-made bombs and crackers on the eve of hartal last night, sources said. The deployment began last night in certain areas defined as "trouble spots," the sources said. These areas included Mirpur, Moghbazar, Paltan, Farm Gate, RK Mission Road, Saidabad, Siddik Bazar, North South Road and Jatrabari. The number of total forces deployed across the city this time has been increased by about 200 compared to the last hartal on October 3, the sources said. Police will be deployed in the "key point installations" and the market areas of the city during the hartal hours, the sources said.

Golden Jubilee of Notre Dame College (1949-1999)

Golden Jubilee Celebrations: Nov. 11, 12, 13, 1999. Inauguration: Nov. 11: 4:00 PM, the honourable President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, has kindly consented to inaugurate the Jubilee. Registration: Notre Damians who have not registered yet are requested to come to the college office within Oct. 30 for registering their names. Notre Damians can register by mail. For this they are to send registration fee by crossed cheque in the name of NOTRE DAME COLLEGE. They should include the following details: 1. name, 2. session, 3. year of passing, 4. group, 5. roll number (if known), 6. present address (for communication), 7. phones (office & residence), 8. profession (in some detail). Registration fee: Tk. 200/- for Notre Damians studying at any educational institution, Tk. 500 for Notre Damians who completed his education & Tk. 750 for Notre Damians with spouse. Class Organizers: On the second day of the celebration, Saturday, Nov. 12, Notre Damians will meet in separate groups (according to their academic years) with their classmates. For this representative from each academic year is needed. Those who are interested to take on this duty should please contact Mr. Sushanta Sarkar by mail, telephone (9565547) or in person. J.S. Peixotto CSC Convener, Golden Jubilee Celebration Phone:832695 e-mail:notredam@cittechnet Benjamin Costa Principal, Notre Dame College