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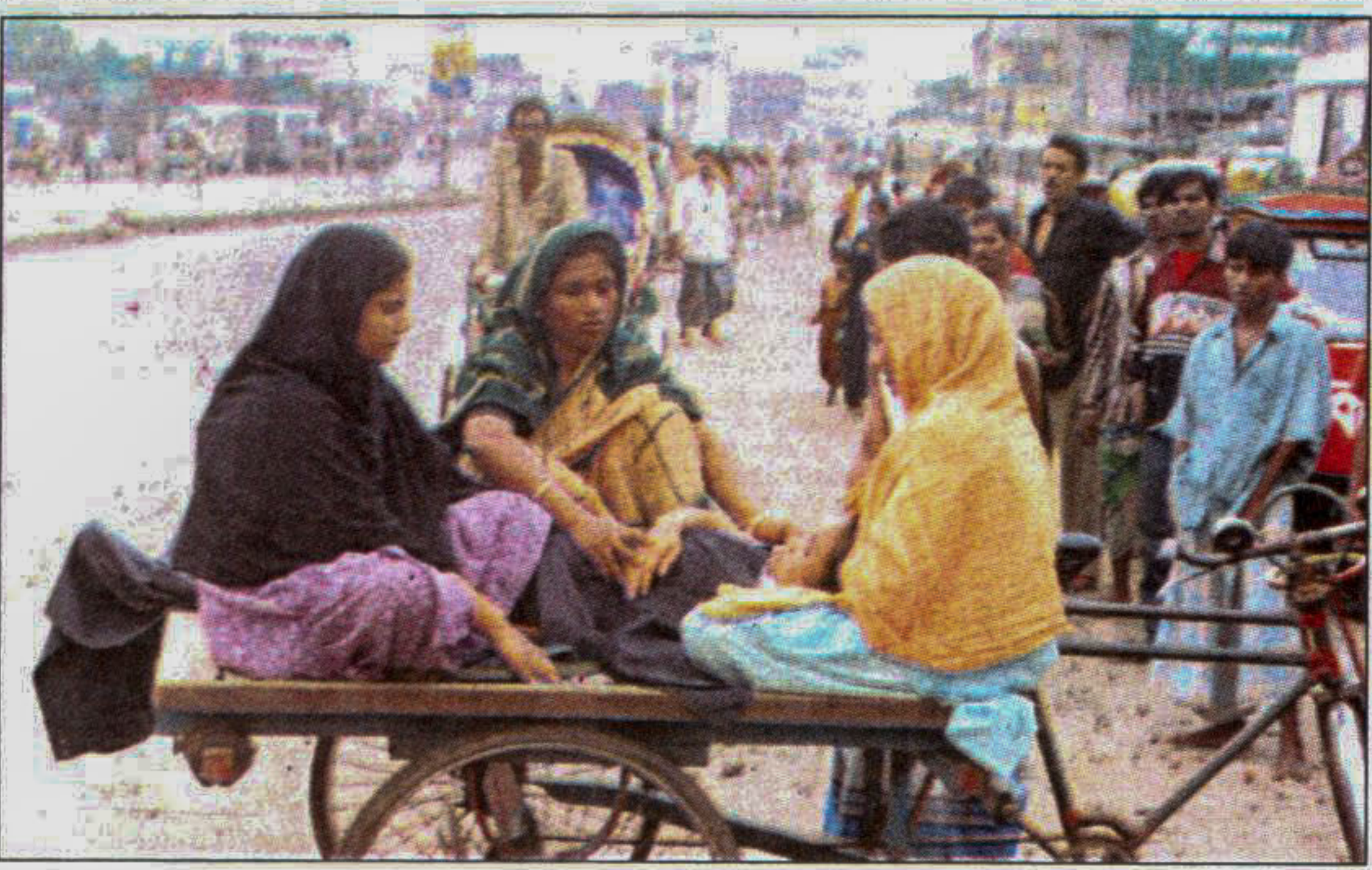
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Pro-people, is it?
An ill child and her anxious mother and relatives on a rickshaw-van to the hospital during hartal hours yesterday.
— Star photo: Sk Enamul Haq

Deadly disposal
Hospitals defy DoE guideline

By Naimul Haq

Pollutants released by incinerators installed in some hospitals in the country for disposal of clinical waste are highly toxic and can damage human organs, even cause cancer.

According to scientists working with international environmental organisations like the Greenpeace and the Health Care Without Harm (HCWH), incineration is a harmful technology. "The air, soil and water with toxic substances, risking life.

Use of incinerators is an old technology. It was banned in most of the European and South American countries recently, they said. There is legal bar on installation of incinerator in some Asian countries including Japan and South Korea, they said.

Seven such harmful incinerators have been installed, three at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, two at Chittagong Medical College Hospital, one at the ICDDR,B and one at the Mother and Child Health hospital at Matuail in the city.

The incinerator at the ICDDR,B is in operation since 1994.

Five others are waiting to be commissioned in five city hospitals. One would be in operation by the year-end in a densely populated area in the old part of the city, sources said.

None of the hospitals took approval from the Department of Environment (DOE) for installation of incinerators though it is mandatory.

Director General of DOE Abdur Rab Khan when contacted told The Daily Star that none of the hospitals or clinics took clearance. "We oppose the idea of installation of incinerators because this technology is known as highly environment pollutant."

The Dhaka City

Shikdar tries to baffle investigators

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Oct 21: Ershad Shikdar has now started "talking irrelevant" with an ulterior motive to misguide the interrogators and create a rift in the police department, Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) sources said today.

After making confessional statements regarding 17 murder charges, the notorious terrorist is now playing foul with the interrogators accusing them of demanding bribe for not torturing him, said a high official of KMP.

The three-member special team headed by NSI Director Masudul Hugi will come to Khulna again on October 28 to resume interrogation. It came here on October 6 and left on October 15 for submitting a preliminary report. The team interviewed a cross section of people here and interrogated Shikdar. One of its assignments was to make a list of police officials who allegedly took bribes from Shikdar.

Police said today that Shikdar's accomplices Liaquat Lashkar was a "Rajakar" during the war of liberation. He was one of the accused in the case filed with Terokhada thana regarding the murder of valiant freedom fighter Fahamuddin in 1974. Steps are being taken to revive that case.

Ershad Shikdar was again checked up today by the medical board formed on Wednesday. He was found fit to appear before the interrogators.

Accordingly, he was questioned this afternoon how he had managed to marry Shova forcing her to divorce her former husband. "No, I have not married Shova and nor forced her to divorce. Rather, she has divorced her husband and taken shelter in my house," he said.

Cheap but dangerous
Killer pesticide vanishes thousands of sparrows

By Reaz Ahmad

Widespread application of contraband Indian pesticides caused the death of some 5,000 sparrows in Jessore on August 31, official sources said yesterday.

Director General of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) M Enamul Hoque told The Daily Star, "over-dose" of Indian pesticides was responsible for the death of the sparrows. "Two DAE teams have already visited the sites", he said.

He also expressed concern over smuggling of toxic pesticides from across the border.

"Farmers in Jessore told us that they would no longer go for cheap but dangerous Indian pesticides. They also expressed their willingness to use IPM (integrated pest management) techniques in future," he added.

In a recent report, UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) noted that majority of the farmers were using toxic chemicals in high dose and more frequently than needed to combat pest attack.

When contacted, Food and Agriculture Minister Motia Chowdhury, said, "What is bothering me most now is, after all these birds are dead, the poor farmers may have to use yet more doses of pesticides than ever before for saving their crops from pest attack."

She explained that usually sparrows are always welcomed by farmers for their habit of eating weeds and pests in the fields. She found the death of a large number of such 'friendly birds' a serious threat to natural biodiversity.

On August 31, villagers in Dakatia on the bank of the river Bhairab in Jessore came out of their houses in the morning on hearing the screaming of some 5,000 dying sparrows. They were shocked to see so many friendly birds dying in their fields but could not guess immediately what was the reason. Dakatia, four km off Jessore town, is known for vegetable cultivation.

People living in areas more than five km away also reported death of sparrows in small flocks in the first week of September.

Death of the biggest ever flock of sparrows in the country should have been an eye-opener for government officials concerned, sources concerned pointed out.

But their response came too late and too little has been done so far in this regard, admitted some officials preferring anonymity. They favour holding of an inter-ministerial meeting immediately to ascertain the volume of contraband Indian insecticides being smuggled into the country and take steps to check this.

"We have to sit with all the stakeholders including officials from the Ministry of Environment and the law enforcing agencies", said an agriculture ministry source.

Ustad and Thyodin are only two of the highly toxic Indian pesticides having wide application in Jessore region, farmers were quoted as saying.



Oh trade, no trade
A street vendor counts his products in the vain hope: maybe he has sold some. While his customers stayed away, so did his lady luck.
— Star photo: A K M Mohsin

Govt gropes for ways to hit revenue target
Kibria asks NBR to pull up socks

As revenue earnings fell short of the target for the first quarter of this fiscal year, the government yesterday charted some special measures to hit the mark, reports UNB.

The decisions, included enhancement of manpower and vehicles, infrastructural development of revenue stations and rewarding those who would give tip-offs about tax evasion and also officials showing good performance voluntarily, officials said.

They said the new measures were taken in a meeting of the National Board of Revenue in the NBR conference room with Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria in the chair.

The NBR in the first three months of 1999-2000 year collected Tk 3,260 crore in direct and indirect tariffs against the target of Tk 3,761 crore for the period.

Although the target was not achieved, the revenue receipt was 7.93 per cent higher than that of the corresponding period of last fiscal (1998-99), the officials said.

The target shortfall in the three months was Tk 501 crore. The shortfall was due to failure in reaching the targets of import duty and VAT (value-added tax) collection.

However, the realisation of income tax was Tk 17 crore higher than the targeted Tk 458 crore for the period.

The amount of direct or income tax realised was Tk 458 crore. It is 21.48 per cent higher than that of the corresponding period in 1998-99 fiscal.

Value-added tax collection in the first three months of 1999-2000 stood at Tk 814 crore, 10.16 per cent higher than last year's but Tk 150 crore less than the target.

With 7.93 per cent higher than the first three months in the last fiscal year, the amount of realised import duties during the period in current financial year is Tk 1,933 crore.

However, it is Tk 423 crore less than the target for July-September in 1999-2000 fixed in the budget, the officials at the NBR and Finance Ministry said.

Against the backdrop of such a revenue scenario, the Finance Minister asked the concerned tax officials "to discharge their duties with more sincerity".

With various decisions taken in the meeting to enhance revenue collection, including incentives, Kibria directed them to be "more enterprising so that the target could be achieved".

NBR Chairman Abdul Mueed Chowdhury, its members and commissioners of income tax, customs and VAT were present in the meeting.

27 killed as Russian rockets hit Chechen hospital

GROZNY, Russia, Oct 21: A Russian rocket strike on the Chechen capital Grozny killed at least 27 people in a city maternity ward today, an AFP correspondent who counted the bodies reported.

The AFP correspondent reported that most of the bodies, which were badly mangled and burned, were women and newborn babies.

The ward was located some 25 metres from the Chechen presidential palace on the central Grozny Liberty Square.

Five Russian rockets crashed into the city centre at around 6:15 p.m. (2015 BST) witnesses said.

Seventeen bodies were recovered from a city market located some 40 metres away from the presidential palace.

Another rocket hit an unoccupied building 10 metres from the Chechen seat of power. The attack also killed a bus driver, the correspondent said.

It was not immediately clear where the other two rockets had landed.

Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov was not in the presidency at the time of the attack.

Violent port city has 42 detained

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Oct 21: Around 100 people including 12 police personnel were injured in sporadic clashes between opposition supporters and police during the hartal period in the port city today, police and witnesses said.

The condition of 15 of the injured including three policemen was stated to be critical.

On Ansar Ali (22) was lying unconscious with bullet wounds in his neck at Chittagong Medical Hospital in the afternoon. Identified as an activist of Shibir, Ali was fighting death, hospital sources said.

The clashes occurred at Anderkilla crossing, Sirajuddaulah Road, Tinpool Crossing, Enayet Bazar, Lovelane Crossing and near Laldighi Maidan. Arson, exchange of fire and blasts of cocktails marked the clashes, witnesses said.

A large number of police personnel, mostly in riot gear, Ansar and BDR were deployed throughout the city.

During the clashes, 42 people were arrested from the spots.

A series of clashes took place between police and activists of BNP, Jamaat, Jatiya Party and Shibir at Anderkilla Crossing from about 3:30 pm. Seventy people including 11 police personnel were injured, witnesses said.

The clashes at Anderkilla started as supporters of Jamaat and Jatiya Party tried to hold a rally. Later, BNP supporters heading towards Zila Parishad market adjacent to Laldighi Maidan to join a rally, being resisted by police, joined the battle, police witnesses said.

Shots were fired from shotguns and teargas shells were lobbed by police to disperse the opposition activists.

The activists also opened fire, threw cocktails and brickbats.

The situation was brought under control at about 4:30pm. But clashes broke again an hour later and continued till the filing of this report at 7 pm, witnesses said.

Some vehicles of police and the city corporation were damaged and old tyres were set ablaze during the clashes.

Earlier, a clash took place at Tinpool Crossing at about 1 pm when police intercepted a procession of BNP supporters. Twenty people were injured.

BNP's Chittagong city unit president claimed that over 100 activists were injured and 100 others were arrested.

Massive hunt to nab Tangail terrorists

TANGAIL, Oct 21: Police launched a combing operation today to eliminate terrorism from Tangail town following the prime minister's instruction to restore peace and stability at the district headquarters, reports BSS.

"We are determined to weed out terrorists from the district town which remained troubled with widespread violence and anarchic activities even two months back," Police Super of the district said.

He said the decision to begin the combing operation was taken few days back, but its launching was delayed as the local police were busy with routine duties during the Durga Puja festival.

Now we will embark on curbing terrorism with our full strength and expecting to free this locality from all sorts of activities that destroy social peace," the police super said.

The district administration officials told the news agency that the law and order in the district town deteriorated extremely over the last few years as the branded terrorists and anti-social groups were active in extortion, murder, kidnap and other illegal acts under the protection of an influential quarter.

PM's bid to woo Australian capital

SYDNEY, Oct 21: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said here today that Bangladesh now stands as one of the best destinations for foreign investment with her government pursuing an open market policy, economic liberalization and attractive package of incentives, reports BSS.

Speaking at a reception according to her by New South Wales Premier Bob Carr, MP, here this afternoon, Sheikh Hasina said due to the pragmatic policy of her government more and more foreign investments are pouring into Bangladesh.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina returned to Sydney this afternoon after an overnight stay in Canberra.

Prayer Timings
October 22

Fajr	Azan	Jamaat
4:30	4:30	5:00
Juma	12:15	1:20
Asr	4:10	4:20
Maghrib	5:35	5:42
Esha	7:45	8:15

Source: Islamic Foundation

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