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No decision yet on allocating gamchha

By Staff Correspondent

The government has not yet communicated anything to the Election Commission about the latter's proposal to replace two election symbols, pan and ship, with gamchha and shirt.

"We are yet to receive any response from the Ministry of Law regarding our proposal for replacing the election symbols," said a high official of the Commission yesterday.

The EC sent the proposal for vetting by the ministry in the first week of this month. "We are still thinking over the issue," a law ministry official told this correspondent yesterday.

Earlier, expelled Awami League leader Abdul Kader Siddique, who is contesting parliamentary by-election in Tangail-8 constituency, had requested the Chief Election Commissioner to allocate him gamchha (a type of thin cotton towel) as his election symbol. CEC Mohammad Abu Hena assured him that he would consider the request.

There are 140 registered elec-

tion symbols. Of these, 119 have been allocated to different political parties and the rest are kept reserved for independent candidates.

"The EC usually gets allegations from Awami League quarters that ship and pan, two of the 140 symbols, resembles boat - election symbol of the ruling party," an official of the EC said. "So, this time we have proposed replacement of the symbols with gamchha and shirt. It should satisfy both AL and Kader Siddique."

Meanwhile, AL leader Rahmat Ali MP has officially informed the EC that there is no scope for it to allocate any candidate an election symbol beyond the 140 registered ones.

Thirty-one people are con-

testing the Tangail-8 by election as independent candidates and the EC has to allocate symbols to them on October 26.

PM apprises President of her visit to Australia

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called on President Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday evening, reports BSS.

The Prime Minister apprised the President of her visit to Australia and said that this would promote export, investment, trade and economic cooperation between the two countries.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who returned to Dhaka on Saturday ending her 5-day official visit to Australia, described her first visit to Australia as 'very successful and fruitful'.

She told the President that the Australian investors expressed their keen interest to invest in Bangladesh. She mentioned her meeting with Australian Prime Minister John Howard, Opposition leader, Commerce Minister, Foreign Minister and other leaders and said that she had fruitful talks with them.

President thanked the Prime Minister for her successful visit to Australia and said that this would bring the two countries closer, specially in the field of trade and economic cooperation.

Attack on army jeep: BNP leader held in Mymensingh

MYMENSINGH, Oct 24: The police today arrested a local BNP leader in connection with attack on the vehicle of GOC Mymensingh, reports UNB.

Shahidul Haq, former general secretary of district BNP, was taken into custody for his alleged involvement in attacking the jeep in which Maj Gen Harunur Rashid was passing by a BNP torch procession on Wednesday, police said.

They said stones were pelted at the jeep near Natun Bazar from the procession, but none was hurt.

BNP leaders AKM Mosharrar Hossain, MP, and Faruk Rahman Sultan have protested the arrest of Shahidul Haq and demanded his immediate release.

NOTHING SECRET ABOUT IT

Circulation of a newspaper is open and transparent all over the world. In Bangladesh, assessing the actual figure is never easy. There appears to be something secretive about it. **Prothom Alo** has decided to reveal the Exact Figures.

Today PROTHOM ALO's

total print is **1,21,382** copies

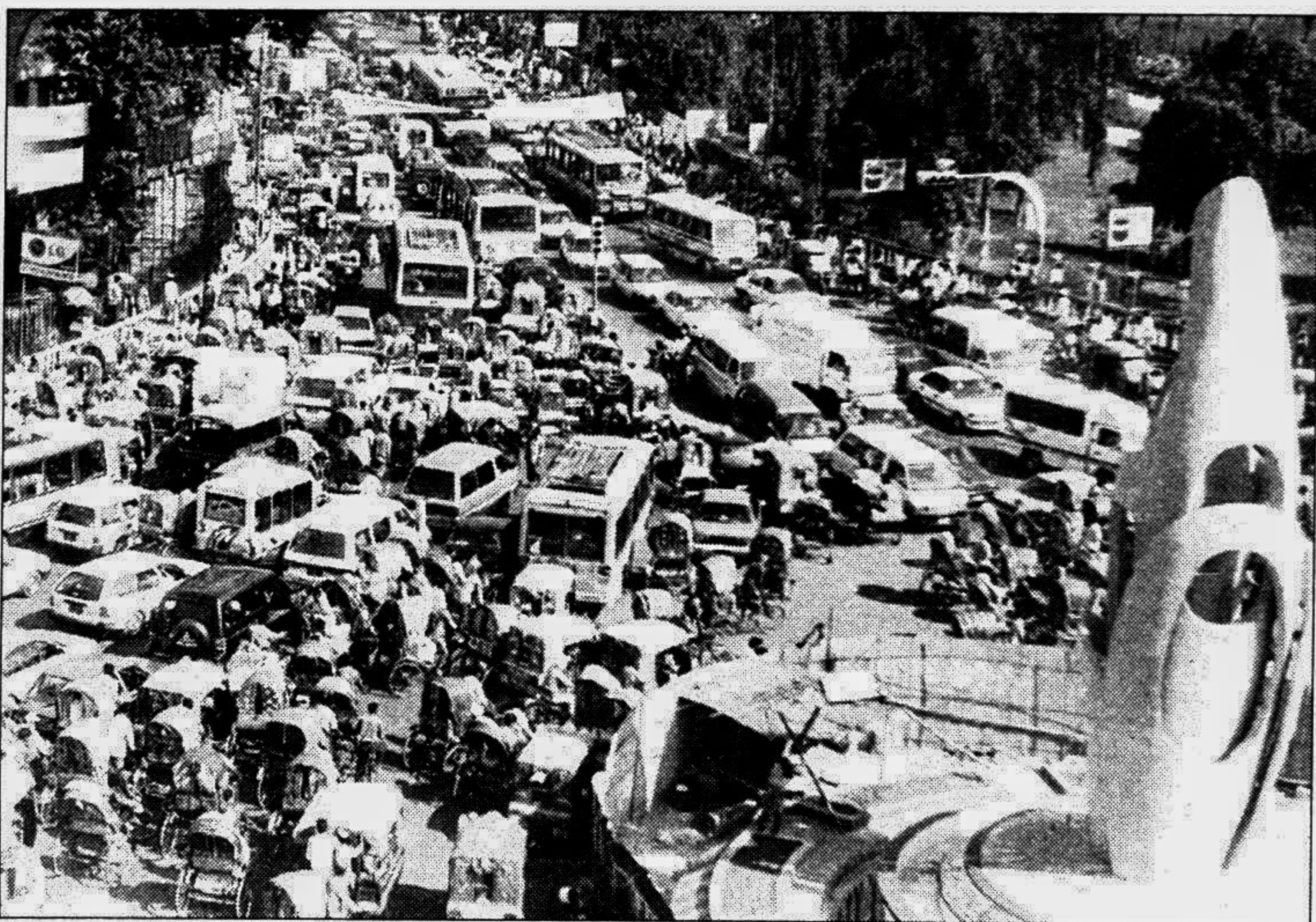
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Traffic chaos is back in the city after a four-day 'holiday' that included a full-day hartal, Hindu festival Durga Puja and the usual weekend.

Ad-interim bail to Shahida Obaid extended

By Staff Correspondent

A Division Bench of the High Court yesterday ordered police not to arrest or harass Prof. Shahida Obaid, allegedly involved in a plot to kill the Prime Minister, until a full length hearing of a petition for an anticipatory bail on November 9.

"This is an extension of the order of the Vacation Bench comprising Justice Sirajul Islam that gave the same instruction to police on October 18," said Advocate Mahabub Rahman, who appeared for Shahida Obaid. "The order amounts to interim relief having the effect of an anticipatory bail."

In his order, Justice Islam had also said that the order would remain valid till the next hearing of the petition after reopening of the court on October 24.

A recent news item, released by state run news agency BSS, claimed that one Shoab Chowdhury, now in custody, told police that he had several meetings with Shahida Obaid on a plot to kill the PM and 30 other dignitaries.

Advocate Mahabub Rahman argued in the court that her name was not there in the FIR. "It, therefore, seems that a conspiracy is being hatched up to implicate her in the case only to harass her in the name of investigation."

100 fake passports seized: One held

By Staff Correspondent

Detective Branch (DB) of police recovered one hundred fake passports and arrested on Abdul Aziz in this connection from the city's Mirpur area Saturday evening.

Acting on a tip-off, DB police raided the residence of Aziz at Mirpur Section-2 at about 6:45 pm and recovered the passports. A case was filed with Mirpur thana on Saturday.

Acid thrown on mother, daughter at Sirajganj

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, Oct 24: A housewife and her young daughter suffered acid burns when a gang of miscreants threw acid on them at their Haribhanga residence in the town in the early hours of today.

The victims identified as Ayesha Khatun, 40, wife of Rezaul Karim, and her daughter Sherily Khatun, 22, in Ullahpara thana of Sirajganj district.

Police and hospital sources said a gang of seven came their house at about 12.15 am and then threw acid on their faces as soon as Ayesha opened the door.

The reason behind the attack could not be known immediately.

Neighbours rushed them to the Sirajganj General Hospital. A case was lodged with Ullahpara thana in this connection but police failed to arrest any of the accused till yesterday.

Hearing in Humayun Zahir Murder Case Nov 8

The Metropolitan Session's judge court in the city yesterday fixed November 8 to hear the arguments in Humayun Zahir Murder Case, reports BSS.

All accused, including Akteruzzaman Chowdhury Babu, were present before the court during the hearing.

Award a block to BAPEX, JS body recommends

By Staff Correspondent

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Undertakings yesterday recommended that the Energy Ministry award a block to Bangladesh oil and gas exploration company BAPEX.

At a meeting which mainly discussed the gas sector, the Committee headed by Imran Ahmed raised a number of questions to Petrobangla and Energy Ministry officials regarding oil and gas exploration, gas reserve and other burning issues.

A Petrobangla audit report that raised objections to the expenditure of Tk 2300 crore by its different departments and subsidiaries was placed before the Committee.

The audit report, prepared by Petrobangla's vigilance team, raised questions on the expenditure of around Tk 1200 crore by Titas Gas Ltd and Tk 700 crore by Petrobangla itself.

The report also raised objections regarding the spending of money by other subsidiaries including Bakhrabad, Jalalabad, Sylhet Gasfields etc. Of these, the questioned expenditure by Bakhrabad is Tk 190 crore.

Attack on photo journalists: Probe body formed

By Staff Correspondent

A one-member committee has been formed by Dhaka Metropolitan Police to probe police action on photo journalists performing their professional duties at the rally of Markazul Islam in the city on Friday, officials sources said yesterday.

They, however, could not say how soon the probe body comprising the DMP Commissioner would submit its report to the authorities.

Twelve photo journalists of different national dailies were injured in the police action.

Meanwhile, General Secretary of Bangladesh Photo Journalists Association AKM Mohsin has demanded proper inquiry into the 'police atrocities'.

The association will bring out a procession in the city to press the demand, he said.

Gas explosion kills 18 in Pakistan

LAHORE, Pakistan, Oct 24: At least 18 people have been killed and dozens others injured in a gas explosion in Pakistan, officials said Sunday, reports AFP.

According to witnesses cited by police, the blast occurred late Saturday in the town of Toba Tek Singh in the central province of Punjab when workers were digging up a gas pipeline.

Eleven workers died in a supply station which was gutted in the fire, a police official said. Seven others died later in hospital, including five women and two children, he said.

Officials, who described the blast as accidental, said five labourers were still missing.

The explosion produced an enormous fireball which prompted the evacuation of several hundred people from nearby houses, a police spokesman said.

Officials said the fire destroyed 170 houses in several

localities. At least two cars, five trucks and about a dozen motorbikes were also gutted, they said.

Police and hospital officials said more than 30 people received burn injuries and the condition of at least six was serious.

Army and air force units rushed to the area and extinguished the fire which had been raging for three hours by cutting the gas supply, they said.

Local officials on Sunday were using a public-address system to urge people to return to their homes, saying the situation had been brought under control, residents said.

Police have cordoned off the area which presented a gloomy picture as walling residents gathered near smouldering homes to mourn their losses, they said.

Rescue workers were engaged in digging through the debris amid fears some people might still be trapped.

Flare test of Kalachhara well completed

From Iqbal Siddiquee

SYLHET, Oct 24: Flare test of the newly drilled well at Kalachhara was completed Tuesday afternoon.

People around the location became panicky as a huge fire was seen from several kilometres away during the flare tests.

Inhabitants of the Moulvibazar town, which is about 20 kilometres away also saw the flame of the fire. They remembered the horrifying blow-out in the Magurchhara well in June 1997.

Drilling of well at Kalachhara location of Moulvibazar district was completed October 10, sources close to the US companies informed. But the officials are maintaining secrecy about the well for unknown reasons.

Fate of the well would be decided after analysing the data of some other tests like, logging, cementing etc. This will take about two weeks more and the company officials are expecting a good result, said a source.

Drilling in the Kalachhara well, located within five kilo-

metres of the abandoned Magurchhara Gasfield started August 12 this year. The two companies - Unocal and its associate Occidental - maintained secrecy in starting the drilling. The location is about 6 kilometres from Kalapur bazar on the Dhaka-Sylhet highway. The area is a sub-section of Majdehe Tea Estate.

The companies consider Kalachhara project as the substitute for the abandoned Magurchhara well as both the locations are in the same structure, the source pointed out.

The Occidental got the right to explore oil and gas in blocks 12, 13 and in 14 in the greater Sylhet region after signing 2 PSCs with the Petrobangla on January 11, 1995. It faced severe criticism as the very first exploratory well suffered a massive blow-out during drilling on June 15, 1997 at the Magurchhara Gasfield in the Komolganj thana under Moulvibazar district.

Opposition to observe 'Demonstration Day' today

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP-led opposition alliance will observe "Demonstration Day" across the country today to protest 'attacks' on opposition pickets during October 21 hartal and killing of a Shibir activist in Chittagong.

As parts of the programme, BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikya Jote will organise public rallies and bring out processions in all city, district and thana headquarters.

In capital Dhaka, the city unit of BNP will hold a public meeting at Paltan Maidan at 3pm today. The meeting over, BNP will bring out a procession which will parade different city streets.

Jatiya Party will organise a rally at Muktangan at 3pm, Jamaat at the North Gate of Baitul Mukarram and IOJ at Purana Paltan crossing after the Asr prayer.

Besides, four other smaller parties - Jagpa, Democratic League, Progressive Nationalist Party and Nationalist Democratic Alliance - will also hold rallies and bring out processions.

Death of teenage girl remains a mystery

By Staff Correspondent

Police are yet to unravel the mystery behind the death of a teenage girl who was found in flames on the stairs of a building in the city's Shyamoli area Friday night.

Besides, the identity of the around 18-year-old girl could not be known even after two days of her death.

Meanwhile, the body was kept at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue till last night.

10 hurt, vehicles damaged during hartal at Faridpur

FARIDPUR, Oct 24: At least 10 people were injured and a dozen vehicles were damaged during a dawn-to-dusk hartal in the town today, reports UNB.

The hartal was called by the Rasul Sainik Parishad, a local Islamic organisation, demanding release of Markazul Islam president Moulana Shahidul Islam.

Local units of BNP, Jamaat and Islami Oikya Jote extended their support to the hartal.

Inter-district transports came under attack at Rajbari crossing and Srirampur on Dhaka-Khulna highway and West Khabashpur near Shamsul Ulum Madrassah on Dhaka-Barisal highway.

Two Markazul activists on fresh remand

By Court Correspondent

Sarwar and Golam Molla, the two activists of Markazul Islam, were taken on a fresh remand for two days by the Detective Branch Police yesterday in connection with the recent incidents of explosive recovery.

Arrested on October 19, under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), the two were earlier taken on a three days' remand. Police claimed they received 'vital information' from them regarding planting of grenades at the Mirpur mosque.

So far, police arrested five people as suspects in connection with the recent planting of explosives in two mosques and a newspaper office in the city. No specific police case has yet been lodged.

Meanwhile, Markazul leaders - Ruhul Amin, Shahidul Islam and Sayed al Misbah - arrested under Section 54, were sent to jail following interrogation.

ATTENTION DESIGNERS, BOUTIQUE & FASHION HOUSES

Welcome to The Daily Star Fashion Album 2000

As the Eid approaches, The Daily Star prepares itself for the big occasion: This year as usual The Daily Star Fashion Catalogue 2000 will feature dresses and saris selected by a panel of judges. The album works as a source book for both buyers and sellers. Designers, boutique and fashion houses are invited to participate in this fashion extravaganza.

How to send your saris and dress materials? Dresses and saris will be considered for selection under seven groups according to their prices.

- Group A : Sari : Price range 3500 Taka and above
- Group B : Sari : Price range between 2000 & 3500 Taka
- Group C : Sari : Price range between 1000 & 2000 Taka
- Group A : Salwar-kameez : Price range up to 3500 taka and above
- Group B : Salwar-kameez : Price range between 2000 & 3500 Taka
- Group C : Salwar-kameez : Price range between 1000 & 2000 Taka
- Men's wear price range : up to 1000 taka

The Daily Star will nominate seven saris and dresses from each group. The nominated items will feature in our Fashion Album 2000 with colour photographs plus write-ups describing the fashion wears and their creators.

Today is the last day to send in your fashion wears and saris for nomination.

Rules and regulations

- The dresses and saris should express the mood of the festival. The materials used for saris and dresses should be locally produced. The design should be original and the material suitable for our weather and environment friendly.
- Information about the fashion house and price should accompany the dresses. In case of saris name of the weavers should be mentioned.
- The dresses and saris send in for the Album are returnable.
- The dresses and saris will be 'accepted for submission with properly filled up forms attached to the letters of invitation.
- There will be an entry fee of taka 100.
- Send your fashion wears and saris to the office of weekly 2000 (mentioned below) between 10 am and 4 pm.

Ziaul Karim
Chief Coordinator

Bizly Hoque
Chief Organiser

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