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# Four new EPZs being built TUs may keep away foreign investors, fear officials

By Rafiq Hasan

The government is setting up four new export processing zones (EPZs), amid fears that allowing trade union in EPZs will make those less attractive to foreign investors.

The four new zones, located in Khulna, Ishwardi, Syedpur and Comilla, will cost more than Tk 275 crore. Those will be ready by the middle of 2001.

More than two lakh people are expected to get jobs in factories in the new EPZs.

The zones at Mongla and Ishwardi are nearing completion. The Mongla zone which will cost Tk 60.29 crore will be the largest 'special industrial zone' in the country, covering more than 1,000 acres taken from Mongla port area.

The 308-acre Ishwardi zone, first in northern districts, will cost Tk 73.50 crore. Fifty-two plots will be distributed among entrepreneurs there in the first phase.

Land acquisition for Syedpur and Comilla EPZs is complete and 'construction will start at the beginning of next year.

The Syedpur zone, to be set up on 230 acres taken from the Railway, will cost Tk 58.51 crore.

The 258-acre Comilla zone, about 100 kilometres from the capital will cost Tk 83.56 crore and will have 208 plots. There will be a new air service between Dhaka and Comilla after opening of the EPZ.

Talking to this correspondent, some high officials of Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) said they are doubtful whether the new EPZs would attract foreign investors if the government allows trade union there.

"A ban on trade union activities in the existing EPZs was one of the major factors that attracted foreign investors to set up industries there," said a high official of BEZA seeking anonymity.

The government is considering allowing trade union in EPZs following pressure from the US government. The American Federation of Labour and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) demanded to the US government withdrawal of GSP (Generalised System of Preference) facilities given to Bangladesh, pleading violation of workers' rights in the EPZs by not allowing trade union.

Despite restrictions on trade union activity, the two existing zones in Dhaka and Chittagong attracted foreign investments worth only about 400 million US dollars in the last 15 years, creating over 90,000 jobs.

Foreign and local entrepreneurs who have set up factories in the two zones also expressed concern about the government decision to lift the ban. They warned the government that foreigners would relocate their investments to other developing countries if trade union is allowed in EPZs.

A trade minister from South Korea, one of the major investors in EPZs, also warned the government that allowing trade union would have adverse impact on foreign investment.



Police put up barricade to stop supporters of Shawkat Momen Shahjahan who marched towards the Election Commission Secretariat in the city yesterday demanding gazette notification of results of Tangail-8 by-elections.

# 'Stop vulgarism and brutality in films'

## Film societies launch campaign

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Federation of Film Societies yesterday launched a two-week campaign against vulgarism and brutality in commercial films.

The campaign, announced at a press conference in the city yesterday, aims to create public opinion against making and screening of commercial films containing vulgar and violent elements which, it said, were bearing negative impact on the society.

As part of the campaign, the Federation comprising some 30 film associations will organise an open discussion at TSC crossing on Dhaka University campus on November 27 at 3pm. Open exhibition of films will also be arranged.

A roundtable discussion will be organised at the Jatiya Press Club on December 3. Film producers, directors, actors and others concerned will take part in the talks.

The film activists will silently march from Shahbagh to the Film Censor Board office at Shantinagar and submit a memorandum to the Board demanding ban on vulgar and violent films on December 6.

Other forms of campaign against unhealthy films include publication of leaflets, posters, banners and souvenirs; signature collection drive and open show of quality films in 15 designated areas including six universities in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Sylhet.

Announcing the programmes at the Jatiya Press Club, Federation Secretary General Golam Rabbani Piblob described how the country's commercial films were increasingly deviating from their objectives of educating and entertaining people and making them watch vulgar movies.

Piblob said the Federation had been continuing movement for the past 37 years for flourishing of good films rather than the bad ones. He said the movies made in the 50's used to reflect the culture and hopes and aspirations of the Bengalees. Even some good films were also made after the independence.

Movies made over last two and a half decades have been purely recreational, he said, but regretted that as time progressed, the films started losing their heritage and uniqueness. Since the 80's, he noted, the Bangladeshi films began leaning more and more towards vulgarism, unrealistic stories, indecent dances and gesture and postures.

The Federation secretary also blamed a section of producers and directors and the Censor Board officials in the posters. Such films, having no touch of creativity, are made with the sole purpose of making money.

In this context, he said, experience had shown that the state-owned financial institutions could not deliver the good as corruption engulfed those places.

# CEC: Shahjahan

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The Election Commission suspended the process of gazette notification of the election results on November 17, pending an investigation into the allegations of irregularities in 19 polling centres.

Shahjahan went to the EC Secretariat with several hundred people. They, however, did not enter the office.

The Election Commission formed a four-member probe body headed by the Additional District Judge of Tangail to investigate the reported irregularities following written complaints from Kader Siddique on November 18. He alleged that votes were rigged in at least 19 centres.

The probe body included a sub-judge and an assistant judge of Tangail and an EC deputy secretary in charge of local government elections.

# Senakunja

From page 1

Minister at the reception. But it remained empty, according to UNB.

On Friday, addressing a press conference, the Prime Minister expressed her intention to extend an invitation to Khaleda to sit across the table seeking to resolve the current political issues.

When contacted, Awami League president member Amir Hossain said: "People have now understood that BNP does not want to solve problem through discussion... it also proves BNP has no logical issue to be discussed and has been staging agitation in the name of so-called movement."

# Panna Murder Case Shikdar brought to Khulna: Trial begins

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Nov 21: Ershad Shikdar was brought to Khulna from Jessore Central Jail today in connection with the Panna murder case.

The trial of Panna murder case began today in the court of the Additional District and Sessions Judge.

In his deposition, the complainant of the case Nurul Islam told the court that Panna was severely injured in an armed attack by Shikdar and his armed cadres near Jorhagate kutchha bazar in 1997.

He succumbed to bullet injuries while under treatment in Dhaka.

A case was recorded with Khalispur thana in this connection and the chargesheet was also submitted in due time.

The other accused in this murder case — Noor-e-Alam, Motti, Idriss Jama, Liaquat Lashkar and Haroon — were also produced in the court.

A total of ten witnesses will be examined, said a source at the court.

On Tuesday, Shikdar and other accused will be produced in the court in connection with Jainal murder case.

Noor-e-Alam, Shikdar's chief bodyguard was also brought to Khulna from Kushtia district jail in connection with Panna and Jainal murder cases.

Meanwhile, Sultan Mahmud Shikdar, Manager of Ershad's ice factory has been taken on police remand for six days in connection with Akimul and Jahangir murder cases.

Mahmud has confessed his involvement in the four murders committed in the ice factory. He is one of witnesses of Jubo League leader Khalid Hossain murder, police said.

Noor-e-Alam and Jahaji Motti have also been taken on police remand for two and five days respectively in connection with Akimul and Jahangir murder cases, police said.

# Jail Killing Case: Hearing deferred again

The hearing of the Jail Killing Case was further deferred to January 12, next year as the High Court did not reply to the reference earlier made by the trial court regarding framing of charges against the suspected killers of four national leaders, reports BSS.

# Death of Sufia Kamal AL's condolence meeting today

A condolence meeting on the death of poet Sufia Kamal will be held at the Engineers' Institution here at 3 pm today, reports UNB.

# AL factions clash over control of Meghnaghat 25 injured

NARAYANGANJ, Nov 21: A fictional clash between two groups of ruling party over control of Meghnaghat left some 25 people injured today, reports UNB.

The condition of three — Ali, 22, Masud, 23 and Babu, 25 — wounded in explosion of homemade bombs was stated to be critical.

Police said two rival groups — one led by Hasnat and the other by Mosharrar, clashed at 11 am in which both sides used firearms.

The feuding groups also exploded 'crackers during the clash.

Movement of vehicles on Dhaka-Chittagong highway remained suspended for about two hours as panic spread in the area resulting in traffic jam.

No case was filed in connection with the incident till the evening.

# Protest march

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November 16.

BNP sources said most of the 113 MPs belonging to the party are expected to join the march, beginning at 11 am from the party central office at Naya Paltan.

City Jamaat chief ATM Azharul Islam told The Daily Star that Dewlar Hossain Saidee and Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury will join the procession while Kazi Shamsur Rahman will not be available as he is undergoing treatment at Suhrawardi Hospital, Jamaat has three lawmakers in Jatiya Sangsad.

The MPs will parade Naya Paltan, Fakirpool, DIT Avenue, Danik Bangla crossing, Baitul Mukarram, Paltan crossing and Tophkhana Road. Khaleda is likely to address a gathering after the procession ends in front of Jatiya Press Club, sources said.

Sources said necessary instructions have been given to the city unit and front organisations for organising a massive gathering.

# Rally at Osmany Udyan today

By Staff Correspondent

The 'Movement to save 11,000 trees of the Osmany Udyan' will hold a rally at the park at 3.30 pm today to mobilise support against encroachments of the open space and press demands for its further expansion.

In a separate statement president and general secretary of Sylhet Bibhag Unnayan Parishad Abed Raja and Najmul Islam demanded of the government to remove the barbed wires raised inside the Udyan as part of a 'conspiratorial move to rehabilitate hawkers' in a bid to destroy the park.

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# JU: No sign of early reopening

By JU Correspondent

Much to the indignation of the students, the authorities are dilly dallying with the re-opening of the Jahangirnagar University (JU), which has now remained closed for 52 days in succession.

Honours and Masters' level students, particularly those wishing to appear at the BCS examinations, have been pressing the authorities to reopen the university without delay to enable them to take their competitive examinations before being age-barred.

The authorities, however, are yet to reach a decision regarding reopening of the University, a section of students alleged. In vain have they been demanding immediate reopening of the university.

Memos have been submitted to the President of the Republic and the Education Minister calling for immediate reopening of the university, some students pointed out.

Some officials of the university told The Daily Star on terms of anonymity that even if all the 'formalities' were completed at the earliest, the authorities would not be able to re-open it before first week of December.

Authorities have been delaying the reopening of the university because of its 'fresh' movement by the students, said some officials of the university.

The university had been closed since die on September 30, in the wake of a movement by students that had been organised to press for 'withdrawal of enhanced admission fees'.

"I am yet to hold a meeting with the Syndicate, which is the supreme authority for taking such a decision," the acting VC told The Daily Star yesterday.

Deans, provosts, proctors, Officers' Association, Employees' Association, however, have already expressed their unanimous view in favour of reopening the university without delay, he added.

Prior to the resignation of Professor Alauddin Ahmed as VC, the university was to be reopened on November 6, sources said. The matter, however, was not placed before the syndicate at its meeting on November 9, as the former VC had convened the meeting 'only to get his resignation accepted', knowledgeable sources said.

Prof Alauddin, it may be recalled, had resigned on November 9 to contest the parliamentary elections at Kishoreganj-1 constituency.

The ex-VC had allegedly prolonged the closure of the university rather deliberately, for 'appointing teachers on political considerations rather than anything else', alleged some of the teachers.

# Neighbour of Rubel cross-examined

By Court Correspondent

Three defence lawyers yesterday cross-examined a neighbour of Rubel in the Third Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court yesterday.

According to a CID investigation, Shamim Reza Rubel, 24, a BBA student of Independent University, was picked up by a team of Detective Branch of Police near his residence on July 23 last year and was tortured to death in custody the same day.

The ten of the 14 chargesheeted accused, including AC Akram and Mukull Begum, were produced before the court yesterday at about 2:30 pm.

The rest four — SI Nurul Alam, constables — Mong She Oen, Abul Kalam Azad and Zakir Hossain — have been absconding since the killing.

During yesterday's proceedings lawyers for three arrested accused — AC Akram, SI Haiyatul Islam Thakur and SI Amir Ahmed Tariq — cross-examined Abu Taher, for about one and half hours.

Lawyers for the rest 11 accused is likely to cross-examine Abu Taher today. Earlier, defence lawyers completed cross examining Abdur Rob, father of Rubel, and Nirala Begum and Selina Akter, two sister-in-laws of Rubel.

# Young man shot dead in city

By Staff Correspondent

An unidentified young man was shot dead by a gang of armed men on Central Road under Dhamondi police station last night.

Police and hospital sources said the incident took place at about 8:30 pm near 37 Central Road.

The gang shot him in his chest, hospital sources said.

The reason behind attack could not be known immediately.

The fatally injured person was rushed to nearby Central Hospital and later shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where the attending doctors declared him dead.

The body of the victim was sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

When contacted, Dhamondi police said they were informed by an anonymous caller about the incident. None appeared to file a case in this connection, police added.

Hospital sources late last night said that the relatives of the victim have identified the dead as Humayun Kabir, 40, an expatriate engineer who came to Dhaka from Los Angeles on November 13. He was scheduled to fly back to the US on Tuesday.

Humayun Kabir on broad car along with his two relatives was going to Jatrabari residence of his brother from Mirpur, hospital sources said; adding the two companions of Humayun have been missing since the incident.

# Action Committee to lay siege to Shahjalal Varsity Dec 3-4

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Nov 21: The All-Party Action Committee (Opposition) yesterday announced to lay a two-day siege to Shahjalal University of Science and Technology on December 3, 4 and a day-long hartal in Sylhet town on December 5 to press for withdrawal of decision on naming the women's hall of the university after Jahannara Imam.

It will also start a mass contact programme from tomorrow.

The committee also declared the VC Professor Habibur Rahman and Professor Jafar Iqbal 'persona non-grata' in Sylhet and demanded their immediate removal from the varsity.

The programme was announced at a meeting of the committee held at a local hotel last night.

The action committee has formed an eight-member presidium with the district unit chiefs of BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat, Khelafat Majlish, Muslim League, JAGPA and Nojamey Islam.

# JP activist shot dead near AJM

By Staff Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Nov 21: A Jatiya Party activist was shot dead at Shimulpara near Adamjee Jute Mills today, reports UNB.

Police said rivals of JP (Ershad) worker Shah Alam Babu, also a terrorist, called him out of his house at noon. They took him to a nearby place and shot him. He died on the spot.

The killers threw the body of Babu into river Shitalakhya. On information, police rushed to the spot and recovered the body from the river.

The body was later sent to Narayanganj General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Police said Babu was a member of Moli group in the local Jatiya Party. He was shot dead due to internal conflict in the group, police added.

# Looted rifles, bullets recovered in Barisal

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Nov 21: Police today recovered three rifles and 12 bullets looted by armed militants of Bhola from on-duty policemen at Char Fenua in Mehendiganj Thana on Saturday.

The seriously injured policemen — SI Abu Taher, 50; Constables, Bashir, 33, Anwar, 32, Manir, 27, Rafiqul Islam, 30 and Zahid, 26 — were shifted to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital from Mehendiganj Health Complex this afternoon.

Meanwhile, the district administration at a meeting today decided to set up two more police camps in Fenua Char area. Two magistrates from Barisal and Bhola districts will also be deployed that area to ensure peaceful atmosphere during harvesting of paddy.

# Over 100 die of arsenicosis so far Little hope for Sona Banu as gangrene grabs her legs

By Staff Correspondent



Sona Banu has already lost one leg. The other is in danger as well.

Doctors at the Dhaka Community Hospital are hoping against all the hope for Sona Banu, 50, a victim of severe arsenic poisoning.

Sona Banu's right leg was amputated four months ago when doctors detected gangrene. Now, her left leg is also gangrenous and her condition is deteriorating. She has been unconscious for the last 24 hours.

Banu's 30-year-old daughter, Rahela, also developed gangrene from arsenic contaminated water. She lost her left leg in 1997.

"I was the first in the family to have developed arsenic poisoning," sobbed Rahela, displaying all that remains of her leg. "I feel like taking my mother back to the family. There is little hope for her survival."

Drinking of ground water contaminated with arsenic leads to arsenic poisoning clinically known as arsenicosis. Quantities of arsenic less than 0.05 mg/L in ground water are permissible by the government.

Dr. Mahmud Rahman, co-ordinator of the DCH, said medical experts in Taiwan proved arsenic poisoning leads to gangrene.

Doctors detected the family during a screening programme at the DCH in Pabna recently. They were brought to the capital for treatment on November 11.

Dr. Quazi Quamruzzaman, chairman of the DCH, said this case was unique, since nine of 13 extended family member were victims of arsenic poisoning.

The gangrene patients detected in the country are found

# President

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The People Order (RPO) 1972, the Election Commission cannot form an inquiry committee on completion of the voting, an official said. Election Tribunals are empowered to take up any election dispute after the elections.

# PARC

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The Association demanded withdrawal of its recommendation immediately.

A press statement signed by DMP DC (East) Mokhesur Rahman said, "if the recommendation of the PARC regarding visits of district administration officials to thana is implemented, than ADC (revenue), ADC (general), and ADC (Education) and officials not involved with dispensation of justice will get opportunities to visit those places."