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## Court delays charges against Sharif for another week

KARACHI, Nov 26: A special anti-terrorist court judge agreed today to wait another one week before filing charges of treason and hijacking against deposed prime minister Nawaz Sharif, who was ordered to return to jail, reports AP.

Sharif will return to court on Dec 4 when charges are expected to be filed.

The prosecution sought the one-week delay to prepare its case against the seven accused, including Sharif's younger brother, Shahbaz, said provincial Attorney General Raja Qureshi.

The legal process against the men began on Nov 11 when the army filed a complaint with the police accusing the ex-prime minister and his coaccused of treason, hijacking, physical endangerment and conspiracy to murder. The next step is for the court to file formal charges.

"We need more time to assess all the witnesses and the evidence," Qureshi told the court. Sharif's lawyers protested the delay.

American, German and Dutch diplomats witnessed the court proceedings.

Buddhadev named Deputy CM of West Bengal

CALCUTTA, Nov 26: West Bengal Home (Police) Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharjee was today named as the Deputy Chief Minister of the state to assist Jyoti Basu, the octogenarian chief minister, reports PTI.

Basu had earlier wanted to be relieved of his post on health ground but yielded to the party politburo's request to continue.

Bhattacharjee's name was proposed by Basu which was unanimously accepted by all Left Front partners, CPI-M Politburo member Biman Bose told newsmen.

## Oil distributors

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the tank lorry owners were not lifting fuel from the Bangabari Oil Depot since Saturday last creating serious fuel crisis in 16 northern districts.

The demands included fixing uniform price for all depots deployment of army and BDR personnel at the Bangabari depot and stoppage of 'illegal' activities of the Bangabari-based tank lorry workers' associations.

## Probe report reveals Tk 65 cr customs duty evaded at Mongla

From Quazi Amanullah

KHULNA, Nov 26: A group of importers and shipping agents have evaded payment of over Tk 65 crore customs duty in collusion with a section of customs and Mongla port officials.

According to a probe report by Customs Intelligence, these dishonest traders did not pay customs duty for importing goods through Mongla port. They have been resorting to such fraudulent practice for at least 15 years, said the commissioner of the customs department.

The fraud was first detected in June when an importer gave a declaration of import of 8000 tonnes of cement but actually imported 11,038 tonnes, evading payment of customs duty of about Tk 47 lakh. A section of shipping agents and port officials were involved in it, the probe report said.

The importers used to unload cargo from ships to barges far from the port. Thus they cheated customs department, not paying duty.

Meanwhile, Chinese flag carrier MV Huzu which disappeared from Mongla port with imported Soda Ash and ma-

## Hospital floor

From page 1

2-bed unit after 24 hours of observation, we somehow managed. But that does not solve the problem."

About half of the nearly 40 life saving drugs required in this unit are not in the hospital store for long, another doctor said.

When contacted, Director of the hospital Prof M A Zaman admitted the bed crisis in PCCU and CCU.

He said, "We now have 160 beds in total. But on an average, bed occupancy exceeds 260. So you can easily understand how acute the problem is."

## Press enjoying absolute freedom'

Chairman of Bangladesh Press Council and Press Appellate Board Justice Habibur Rahman Khan yesterday said the press in the country is enjoying absolute freedom, reports BSS.

"At present there is no control over the press from the government, so the newspapers can publish anything which is newsworthy without any fear and intervention," he said while addressing the Fourth Annual Conference of Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) at the Jatiya Press Club auditorium in the city.

Chaired by DRU President and senior reporter of the Daily Ittefaq Shahjahan Sardar, the inaugural session of the conference was addressed by General Secretary Mohiuddin Islam Raju.

Rajman said the press, which is considered as the fourth estate of a country, was fully controlled by the then Pakistan government when journalists had to work under a lot of restrictions.

"Such restriction no more exists in the newspaper industry at present and journalists are working in a free, fair and neutral atmosphere both in and outside of their offices while gathering and compiling news," he said.

The Press Council Chairman mentioned the role of newspaper in a civil society for flourishing democracy by creating awareness among the people.

"It can also play an important role in curbing terrorism and removing all sorts of evil things from society," he said.

Rahman urged the members of the organisation to publish objective news with courage and responsibility upholding the country's interest above all.

Later, he handed over crests and cheques to the journalists who won "Reporters Unity '99" award in different fields of journalism.

## 10 hurt as AL, BNP clash at Rangamati

RANGAMATI, Nov 26: Ten persons were injured, three of them critically, at Reservebazar in the town this evening in a clash between activists of two rival political parties, reports BSS.

A dozen of shops and the office of local vernacular daily were ransacked during the clash.

The clash broke out when the activists of the ruling Awami League and its front organisations brought out a procession at Reservebazar this evening in protest against shooting at a Chhatra League activist during the opposition-called hartal yesterday.

When the procession reached near a shop belonging to the secretary of Rangamati town unit of Juba Dal, Akbar Ali, a few people from the procession attacked the shop and injured the owner critically in presence of the police posted there from yesterday, the eyewitnesses and BNP sources said.

When the news of the attack on Akbar Ali spread, the activists of both Awami League and BNP clashed violently ransacking shops in the area.

Army personnel rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control as the police failed to do it.

Shops in the commercial area of Reservebazar have remained closed. No modes of vehicles were plying in the area till the filing of this report tonight.

Critically injured leaders of Juba Dal and Zia Parishad, Akbar Ali and Jasimuddin, and a passer-by, Upal Chowdhury, have been admitted to Rangamati Sadar Hospital, hospital sources said.

The decision to introduce plastic laminated licence was taken jointly by the ministries of communication and finance after four year's consultation with BRTA to check issuance of fake driving licence and increase government's revenue tonight.

Sources concerned alleged that 80 per cent of the paper book driving licences are fake.

Issuance of laminated licence was stalled through a BRTA circular following protests from transport owners and workers, BRTA officials said.

When contacted, BRTA



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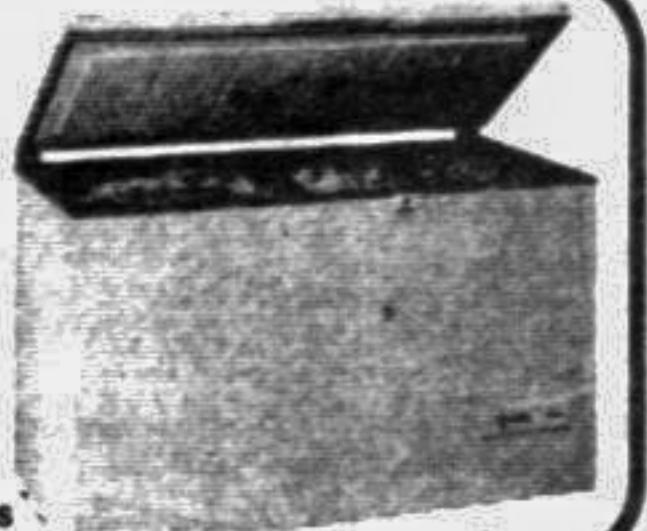
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Injured Shibir activist dies in Satkhira

From Our Correspondent

SATKHIRA, Nov 26: An Islamic Chhatra Shibir activist, who was injured in a clash during hartal at Kaligonj on Thursday, died this morning. He was on way to Dhaka for treatment.

The body of Ali Mostafa, 20, was brought to Satkhira at 9 am and after autopsy, the first namaj-e-janaza was held at Shahid Razzak Park. He was buried at his family graveyard at Purbo Nalpa at Kaligonj thana after another namaj-e-janaza at Kaligonj Shaheed Suhrawardy Park this afternoon.

In protest against the killing, district and Kaligonj thana liaison committee in two separate meetings held at Satkhira and Kaligonj chalked out programmes including protest meeting at Kaligonj football ground on November 27, and a half-day hartal throughout the district in November 28.

A case was filed with Kaligonj police station.

One Shawkat Ali was arrested in this connection.

## Dawn-to-dusk hartal in Feni

On Monday

FENI, Nov 26: Newly elected commissioners of Feni municipality have called a dawn-to-dusk hartal in the town on Monday demanding gazette notification of their election results, reports UNB.

They made the announcement at a press conference here today. They also demanded re-election in Barahipur and Madhupur centres where polling was postponed due to violence.

Chairman and seven commissioners of the municipality were elected unopposed and election for the remaining posts of commissioners was held on October 28.

Earlier, they called a hartal on November 17 to press their demand.

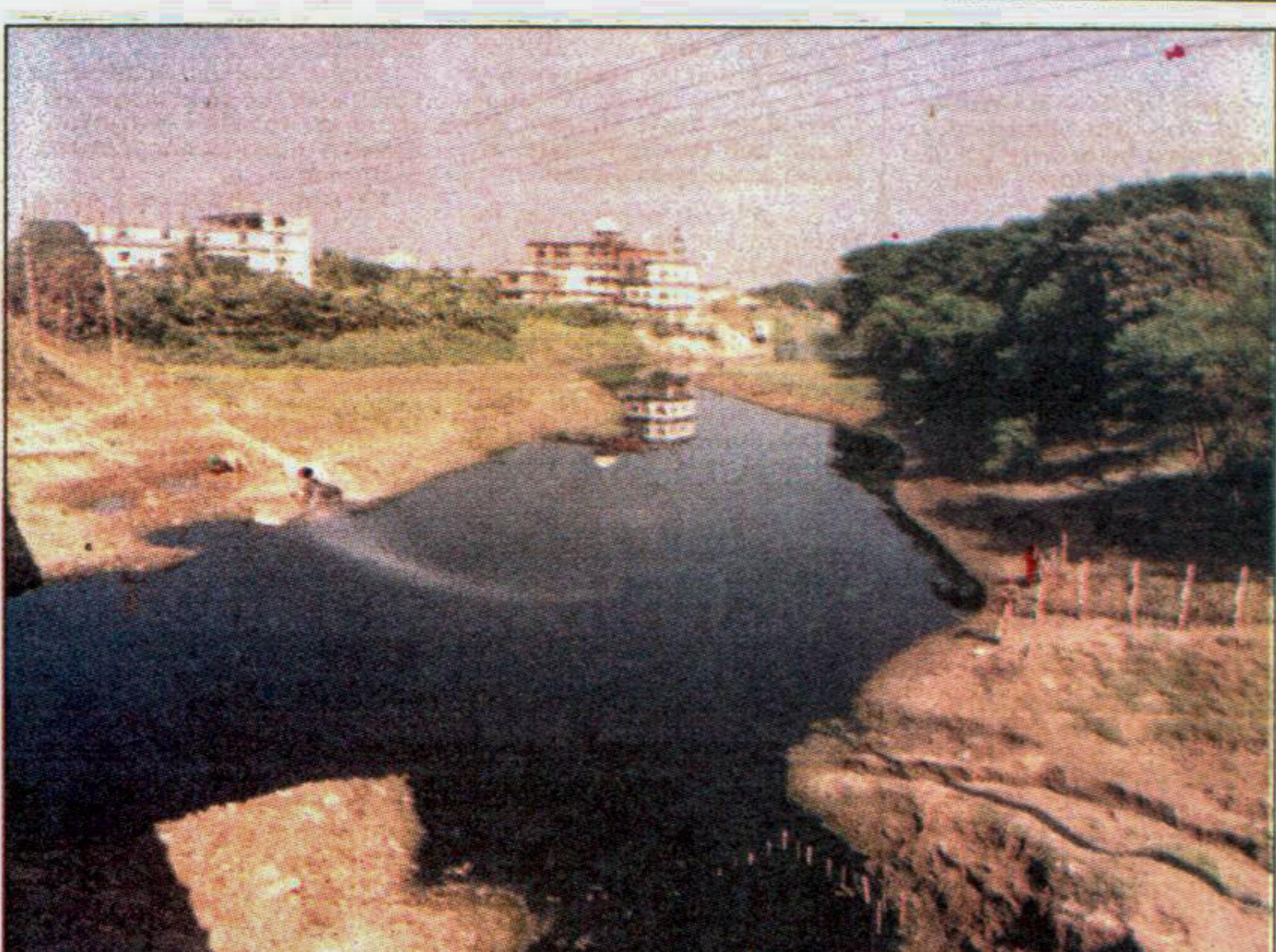
## Markets, schools remain open on Friday

By Staff Correspondent

A number of markets, business enterprises, firms, factories and educational institutions were kept open yesterday despite the weekend to make up for the loss of working hours due to Thursday's hartal.

Some private offices also remained open.

A number of educational institutions including private universities were open for examinations and classes.



An offshoot of the river Dhalaswari polluted with untreated waste from dyeing and textile factories at Karnapara, Savar. (Story on front page). — Star photo by Sheikh Enamul Huq

## 'Most dangerous museum'

ISLAMABAD, Nov 26: The United Nations said today it had defused hundreds of live bombs on display in Afghanistan at what was possibly the most dangerous museum in the world, reports Reuters.

Peter John le Sueur, a UN technical adviser on demining, told a news conference the museum in Zendagan town, near the Western city of Herat, was "probably" the most dangerous museum in existence due to the live devices on display.

In the month-long operation last month, experts defused, destroyed or exploded all the ordnance, including 18 aircraft bombs weighing 500-kg each, at the request of the ruling Taleban movement.

"The museum was initially set up — in 1992 — with the best of intentions to warn the people about different shapes and forms of ordnance, mortars, rockets and bombs," le Sueur said.

"But what the authorities did was unwittingly create a serious hazard," he said.

The museum, in which live and defused rockets and bombs were laid out in the open without warning, is in the heart of the town with a population of few thousand people.

Le Sueur said any accident, even mishandling a small 5-kg mortar, could have triggered a chain reaction of bigger explosions and destroyed an area of at least 1,000 metres.

"It could have killed hundreds of people or possibly thousands of people," he said.



Waste from the factories getting into the river. — Star photo

## Issuance of plastic laminated driving licence stalled

By Staff Correspondent

Issuance of plastic laminated driving licence for professional drivers has been stalled three months after its introduction, sources in Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) said.

The decision to introduce plastic laminated licence was taken jointly by the ministries of communication and finance after four year's consultation with BRTA to check issuance of fake driving licence and increase government's revenue tonight.

Sources concerned alleged that 80 per cent of the paper book driving licences are fake.

Issuance of laminated licence was stalled through a BRTA circular following protests from transport owners and workers, BRTA officials said.

When contacted, BRTA

## 15 hurt as AL factions clash at Muladi

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Nov 26: At least 15 people were injured as two factions of Muladi thana Awami League clashed over selecting candidate for next Upazila election.

Witnesses said the two factions clashed on Muladi College Campus at about 2.30 pm when a faction of the local leaders was holding a meeting there to select the candidate.

The intending candidates are: former Dhaka BCL leader Mostaq Ahmed Senu, convenor of thana unit Al Abdus Salam and local leaders Abdul Razzak Bhuiu and Kububuddin.

Suddenly some supporters of Senu attacked the meeting. During the 30-minute clash, both the groups exchanged nearly 30 rounds of gunshots and threw brickbats injuring 15 activists, witnesses said.

Earlier, on November 21, local AL at a meeting failed to select the candidate.

However, no case was filed with police.

## Quake damages buildings in Iranian city

TEHRAN, Nov 26: About 50 homes and buildings were damaged by an earthquake in northern Iran today, the second hit the area in a week, reports AP.

The 4.6 magnitude quake in the city of Gorgan, capital of Golestan province, caused no death, state-run radio reported.

It said that the earthquake shook the city at 8 am.

A 5.6-magnitude earthquake hit the same region last Nov 19, killing a 9-year-old boy and injuring a 6-year-old boy, according to official reports.

In 1997, a 6.1-magnitude quake in Golestan killed nearly 1,000 people and left tens of thousands homeless.

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