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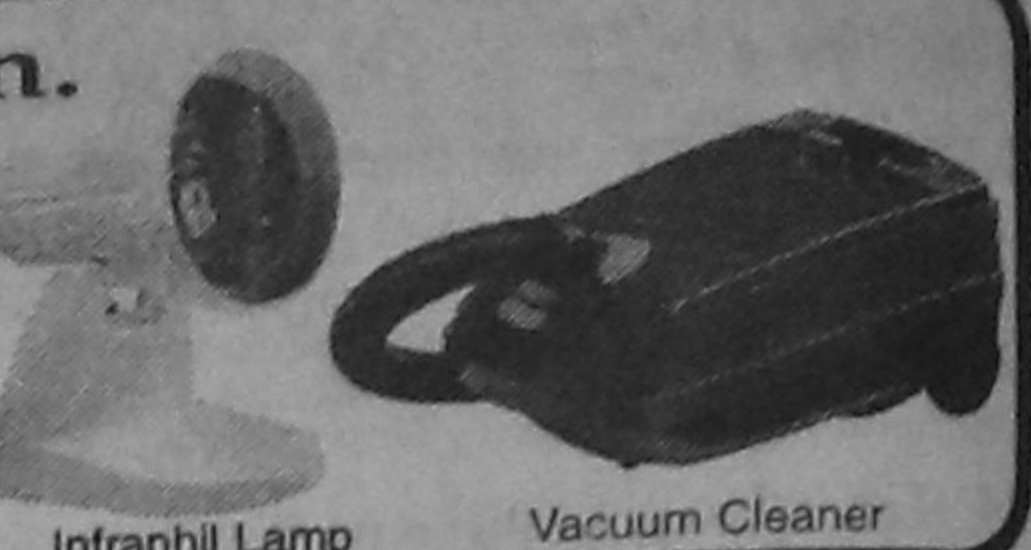
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Driving the wrong way

By Asad-uz Zaman

Vehicles are driving the wrong way down one-way streets, creating a public safety hazard despite efforts by police to crack down on the practice.

Panthapath Road, Mirpur Road near Dhaka College and Kalabagan, Manik Mia Avenue near Farm Gate and the wireless crossing near Maghbazar are some of the streets where drivers drive against the traffic flow to save a little time and energy.

Sergeant Pallab, a traffic officer who patrols the Panthapath-Green Road crossing, said they only allow vehicles to break the law under special circumstances.

"Sometimes we have to allow vehicles to drive the opposite direction down one-way streets on humanitarian ground," said Pallab.

Although rickshaws aren't allowed on VIP roads, Pallab said the police have to allow them occasionally at the passengers' request. However, he admitted some vehicles do evade the watchful eyes of the traffic police.

"Traffic police cannot watch each and every vehicle on the road since they are not computers," he argued.

Sirajul Islam, the traffic DC, said his office wasn't aware of the issue.

"We do not know of these sort of things... we cannot deploy traffic personnel to every road," said Islam, who encouraged people to abide by the rules. "Some vehicles use to break the law. However, you should see that we are prosecuting those who do so now."

Interns at Osmani hospital on strike

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Feb 19: The interns at the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College continued their strike for the third day today protesting against an attack on a doctor of the hospital.

Meanwhile, the Sylhet district unit of BMA demanded arrest of the attackers within 72 hours from tomorrow morning.

The doctors at a meeting today also threatened to launch a fresh agitation programme if the demand was not met.

The Principal of the college Prof Golam Kibria and Director of the hospital Brigadier Farid Uddin Bhuiyan also attended the meeting. The speakers at the meeting condemned the armed attack on the physician.

The Sylhet BMA will wear black badges and observe a 2-hour token strike from 11 am tomorrow. It would also hand over a memorandum to the administration office demanding action against the attackers. The BMA leaders called on Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury at the Sylhet Circuit House in the afternoon. The Speaker asked the DC and SP to arrest those responsible for the incident within 24 hours.

4-yr-old girl allegedly raped by neighbour

By Staff Correspondent

A four-year-old girl was allegedly raped by her neighbour at Sheikherteek in the city's Mohammedpur area yesterday. The neighbour, Kawsar, lured the girl at her house in the name of sightseeing, said hospital sources quoting the victim's relatives.

He took the girl to an under-constructed building at Road No 2 and violated her, the relatives alleged.

The alleged rapist left the spot as the victim cried for help. Local people rushed to the spot and rescued the girl. They took the victim to her family. Later, she was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital with serious injuries.

'Resist eviction of slum dwellers'

By Staff Correspondent

A rally was held at BNP Bazar at Agargaon in the city yesterday protesting Home Minister's announcement to demolish slums from today, said a press release.

Basti Oikya Sangram Parishad (BOSP) leaders Rashed Khan Menon and A F M Mahbubul Huq and leaders of 11-party groups took part in the rally. The speakers urged the slum dwellers to resist the demolition programme, it said.

Menon said the Home Minister said terrorists live in slums. The ruling party has been providing shelter to the terrorists in posh areas of the city, he said. So if the government really wants to arrest terrorists, it should arrest the terrorists of its own party.

Demanding arrest of the god-fathers of the terrorists and drug traders, Menon said without any arrangement for rehabilitation, eviction of slum dwellers is unconstitutional, undemocratic and similar to ignoring an order from the High Court.

A F M Mahbubul Huq said the government is talking about eviction of slum dwellers since they want to clean Dhaka before the visit of US President Bill Clinton.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina unveiled the plaque of the Muktijoddha, Bangabandhu and Bangladesh Research Institute at Kushi in Gopalganj yesterday. —PID photo

Conspiracy on to undermine spirit of Liberation War: PM

TUNGIPARA, Gopalganj, Feb 19: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today said the fallen autocrats have ganged up with communal forces and urged the people to remain alert against any design to undermine the spirit of liberation war, reports UNB.

"A deep-rooted conspiracy is going on to foil the development efforts of the government," she told a foundation laying ceremony of Muktijoddha, Bangabandhu and Bangladesh Research Institute at Kushi here.

The institution to be built at a cost of Tk 35.16 crore, will carry out research on liberation war, independence, Bangabandhu and Bangladesh. It will be set up on four acres of land.

The institute located at Tungipara-Gopalganj roadside will be a centre of excellence for conducting research on liberation war and freedom fighters of Bangladesh and other countries of the world. Scholars from home and abroad will come here to join the research work.

The institution will have library, archive, research cell, hall room, conference center and administrative blocks. A museum, waterfront with sculptures, open stage, playground,

computer section, student dormitories, and college for foreign research associates will also be accommodated in the institute. The Prime Minister said that none would be allowed to undermine the spirit of the War of Liberation and distort the national history.

She said the government has already taken steps for projecting true national history in textbooks and the media. But some people who do not believe in the liberation and independence of the country are criticising the measures.

The government has set up Shikha Chirantan (Flame eternal) at Suhrawardi Udyan and is setting up the independence monument at the historic places for keeping the memories of the national heroes alive. A war museum will also be built.

The Prime Minister said the government has taken all possible steps for preserving the memories of the War of Liberation.

Earlier, the Prime Minister unveiled the plaque of the foundation stone and witnessed model of the project. She planted saplings on the premises.

Later, she distributed Bangabandhu Shishu Padak to meritorious students of primary schools of the district.

Vice Chancellor of the National University Prof Aminul Islam presided over the function.

The Prime Minister said the government has taken all possible steps for preserving the memories of the War of Liberation.

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Seminar on solid waste management Compost projects to create new job opportunities

By Staff Correspondent

Community-based approach is the most suitable method of solid waste management in urban areas, speakers at a two-day regional seminar on 'Community-based Solid Waste Management' in the city observed yesterday.

It turned into compost, organic wastes could help replace a huge quantity of chemical fertilisers and save our environment from degradation, they pointed out.

Participants at the seminar, held at the BRAC centre, shared experiences of different cities in the region in managing wastes. Representatives from nine countries are participating in the seminar.

The seminar which concludes today, has been jointly organised by 'Waste Concern', a local NGO, under the sponsorship of Regional Urban Development Office (RUDO) South Asia, USAID Urban Management Program (UNDP/UNCHS), Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific Water and Sanitation Program—South Asia.

The speakers brought to light how neighbourhood compost projects have been set up with success in many Asian cities, which, in turn, had created new employment opportunities.

The State Minister for Environment & Forest, HN Ashekur Rahman in his speech as the chief guest said that Dhaka presented a sorry spectacle as far as waste management was concerned. He said only 42 per cent of the total wastes of the city is cleared regularly. It is like a blind wall coming upon and crushing us. If timely steps are not taken, Dhaka will cease to live and grow," Rahman said.

Tanneries in the city's Hazaribagh area are discharging tonnes of untreated wastewater-choking surface drains with leather residues which could very well be turned into compost, the minister said. "The government is encouraging community based approach to solve the waste problem of the city," Rahman added.

Syed Marghub Murshed,

Secretary, Environment and Forest Ministry said that Dhaka's garbage disposal continues to be most irritating where public health becomes the main casualty. He emphasised the need for community based approach to solve the problem. Otherwise, he cautioned, Dhaka may become an "environmental nightmare" as its population is expected to rise to 30 million in the year 2021.

Overseas participants said that the main challenges to setting up of community based waste management systems happen to be lack of suitable space, limited demand for the product and lack of knowledge on use of compost.

Dr ATM Nurul Amin of Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand, said that Bangladesh is a labour-abundant economy and its advantages must be utilised to turn wastes into resources. The global support is there and chances are bright to start activities for achieving 'social economies'.

'Slum dwellers must have a place to live'

By Staff Correspondent

Any solution to the urban poor's housing problems must uphold the country's constitution, which guarantees the right to shelter for all, concluded a seminar yesterday.

Dr. Kazi Faruk Ahmed told his audience at 'Settlement of the Urban Poor: Challenges in the New Millennium' the demolition of slums was linked to the question of human rights and should be stopped in the courts.

Slum dwellers contributed to the city's economy and should have a place to live. However, special interest groups were pushing the demolition project to further their own agenda, said Ahmed.

Speakers also concluded Bangladesh must arrange acceptable housing for all citizens since it signed the United Nations' Istanbul Declaration in 1996.

Prof. Mohammad Amanullah, state minister for Ministry of Health and Family Planning, was the chief guest.

Kushi Kabir, ADAB chairman, chaired the concluding session of the two-day seminar, which was held at the IDB Bhaban auditorium in Agargaon.

Maoists kill 15 as Nepal celebrates democracy day

KATMANDU, Feb 19: Suspected Maoist rebels attacked a police station with crude bombs in mountainous midwest Nepal today, killing 15 policemen and wounding 16 others, police said.

The guerrillas struck as Nepal celebrated Feb 19 as democracy day. King Birendra became a constitutional monarch after democracy was established in 1990.

A military and cultural parade in the Nepalese capital highlighted the celebrations.

The rebels threw crude bombs — tin pots filled with explosives — at the police station in Ghat, a village in Rolpa District, nearly 320 kilometers west of Katmandu, the Nepalese capital.

The wounded policemen were being flown to nearby hospitals, police said.

Since the rebels began their violent campaign nearly four years ago, more than 1,000 people have been killed in the Himalayan state.

The rebels demand an end to the constitutional monarchy.

police repression and feudalism. They are active in 19 of Nepal's 75 districts.

A report from Herabadi, India adds: Carrying guns and bombs, nearly 25 suspected Maoist rebels attacked a police post in southern India, killing seven policemen and wounding eight others, police said.

The rebels, belonging to the People's War Group, lost one of their leaders in an exchange of gunfire with police that lasted three hours on Friday night, a police officer said on condition of anonymity.

Although there was no immediate claim of responsibility, the government has blamed all recent attacks on the group.

Earlier story on Page 9

Hand of Jubo League worker blown up while making bomb

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Feb 19: Right hand of a Jubo League activist was blown up in an explosion while he was allegedly making bomb in an abandoned house at Nirala residential area this noon.

Later, Kabir Sheikh, 30, was admitted to Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) under police custody also with serious burn injuries.

Police also arrested another Jubo League worker from the spot and recovered a hand bomb.

A case was filed with Khulna police in this connection.

HR activists observe hunger strike in city

Demand for govt-opposition dialogue to end stalemate

Several hundred human rights activists yesterday observed a token hunger strike at the central Shaheed Minar demanding resolution of political stalemate through dialogue between the government and the opposition parties, reports UNB.

Organized by Bangladesh Human Rights Commission, the advisors of the commission, members of the executive body, leaders and activists of its Dhaka district and city units took part in the strike that lasted two and a half hours from 9-30 am.

Later, a rally was held with its executive committee president Kazi Abdur Razzak in the chair. It was addressed by UNB Chairman Amanullah Khan, Advocate Rokeya Kader, Barrister Abdullah Al Mamun, Saiful Islam Dildar, SN Goswami, Rezaul Karim Chowdhury and A K M A Hamid.

The speakers made an appeal to the government and the opposition to sit for dialogue shunning the path of violence. They said the situation has been deteriorated as the government without creating congenial atmosphere for dialogue indulged in harassing the opposition activists by implicating them in various cases.

The human rights leaders held the opposition parties responsible for vitiating the public life and paralyzing the national economy by enforcing martial law as was done by the ruling party when it was in opposition.

They regretted that Parliament remained ineffective due to the absence of the opposition, said a press release.

The leaders also threatened to go for token hunger strike at district and thana level and fast unto-death in Dhaka after a grand rally if the government and opposition failed to respond to their demand for resolving the problem through dialogue.

Train fire kills 18 in India

BOMBAY, Feb 19: At least 18 passengers were burned to death and 15 others injured when six compartments of a train caught fire today in the western state of Maharashtra, police said.

A police official said the fire broke out at about 3.30 am local time in the pantry car of the train travelling from Bombay to the northern state of Punjab and that the tragedy occurred at Pusaiwar, about 400 kilometers north of Bombay.

The cause of the fire is yet to be known. The injured have been rushed to the Bhusawal railway hospital, north of Bombay," said police official AC Akde.

A railway spokesman, however, said initial reports suggested that the fire originated in one of the coaches where some of the passengers were drunk... and probably lit a match. Mukul Marwah, chief spokesman for the railways said.

None was arrested till filing of this report at 7-30 pm today.



BTV artistes performing at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday as part of its programme on Ekushey. —Star photo

Army officer testifies against Sharif

Airport was blacked out, fire trucks placed on runways

KARACHI, Feb 19: The Karachi International Airport was blacked out and fire trucks deployed on the runways to prevent the aircraft, which was returning Army Chief Gen Pervez Musharraf to Pakistan, from landing, an army officer testified today, reports AP.

Lt Col Attiq-uz-Zaman Kiyani told an anti-terrorist court that soldiers eventually switched the lights on and cleared the runways to allow the aircraft to land.

Kiyani's testimony came in the third week of the attempted murder trial of ousted prime minister Nawaz Sharif and his six coaccused. The men also are charged with terrorism, kidnapping and hijacking.

The charges, which carry either the death penalty or life in prison, stem from an Oct 12 incident in which Musharraf's aircraft was allegedly forced to stay airborne by Sharif, who had appointed his own man as army chief.

But the army resisted, took power, arrested Sharif and allowed the aircraft to land apparently with only seven minutes of fuel still remaining. Sharif has pleaded not guilty to the charges. Kiyani told the court he was at the airport to welcome

Musharraf back to Pakistan, in keeping with military tradition. Musharraf had been in Sri Lanka on an official visit.

Kiyani was the army officer who laid the original police complaint against Sharif which led to his indictment and trial.

The army took over the airport at around 7 pm local time on Oct 12. Kiyani said arresting Ghous Ali Shah, the advisor to the prime minister on Sindh provincial affairs. Shah is one of the coaccused in the case.

The decision to deny Musharraf's plane landing was made by the prime minister, Kiyani said.

The trial resumes next Wednesday. Another report adds: Militant Islamic groups, waging a secessionist insurgency in Indian Kashmir, said today that the last days of Sharif were difficult ones.

They said Sharif had begun a crackdown on militant Islamic groups headquartered in Pakistan.

But the pressure eased after the army overthrew Sharif in a bloodless coup on Oct 12, said Abdullah Muntazir, a spokesman of Lashkar-e-Tayyaba — a key Islamic group fighting Indian rule in Kashmir.

A few weeks before the military coup, police arrested more than 500 supporters of four major groups waging jihad (holy war) against Indians in Kashmir and raided their offices in various cities," he said. "We were worried and prayed to Allah (God) to remove the obstacles in our way."

He said their prayers were answered with Sharif's removal. The crackdown had begun after a bitter border war between India and Pakistan in the Kargil region of disputed Kashmir.

In several cities, including Lahore, our offices were raided and rumours were rife that the government plans to ban our annual gathering," Muntazir said. "Some of those who were arrested were released during Sharif's time, but most of them after the military took power."

Sharif blamed a spate of religiously motivated killings that occurred in the last months of his rule on the religious parties and militants, he said were being trained in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Some religious leaders say the crackdown was at the behest of the United States.

Chinese water resources minister due today

Zhang Jiyao, Chinese Vice Minister for Water Resources, arrives in Dhaka today on a week-long visit to Bangladesh, sources at the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) said, reports BSS.

Jiyao, leading an eight-member delegation of experts and engineers, will hold talks with Bangladesh officials and experts and suggest ways to mitigate sufferings caused by flooding in the country.

Water Resources Secretary Dr A T M Shamsul Huda, who will head the Bangladesh delegation at the talks, will welcome the guests on arrival.

The discussions during their stay here will be based on the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the two countries in 1997, the sources said.

'Asian food processors should share experiences'

By Staff Correspondent

Participants at a two-day international workshop here on small scale food processing recommended formation of a network among food processors in Asian countries to share experiences for development of the sector.

Such a network for disseminating information will help governments and organisations in the countries in formulating policies and giving technology support, they said.

As many as 50 delegates from eight countries including Bangladesh participated in the workshop, organised by the Intermediate Technology Group, Bangladesh, a UK-based NGO. The workshop ended yesterday.

Researchers, scientists, technicians and food processing experts from Nepal, India, Vietnam, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh presented papers describing their experiences in food processing and prospect of the sector.

They observed that small scale enterprises in developing countries should get correct information on latest technological developments and the market situation in the region and beyond.

Awareness should be created among people about health and hygiene, utilisation and mobilisation of local resources, quality and packaging of processed food and improvement in post-harvest technology. Production of 'artificial and imitation food' should be discouraged, they said.

Presenting a paper on growing of small scale food processing enterprises in Bangladesh, Saifullah M H Saif said food processing is a recent phenomenon in the country and share of the industry in the GDP is only two per cent. But it is 7.4 per cent in Thailand, 10.4 in the Philippines, 7.6 in Sri Lanka and 5.1 in Pakistan, he noted.

Huge investment is needed to develop the sector in the country, he observed.

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