

What's on today....

Classical Music Festival: On the 2nd and concluding day of the Indian Classical Music Festival, a sitar recital by Kunal Das and vocal recital by Pt Vijay Richlu will be presented. Organiser: Indian High Commission. Venue: National Museum Auditorium. Time: 6 pm.

Weather

Kalboishakhi likely

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty to squally wind is likely at few places over Dhaka, Sylhet, Chittagong and Rajshahi divisions and at one or two places over Barisal and Khulna divisions in the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB. Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period, the Met Office said.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 33.4 degree Celsius was recorded at Jessore and the lowest 15.8 degree Celsius at Srimangal. The highest rainfall in the country was recorded at Dhaka which was 107 mm.

Table with columns: City/Town, Temperature (Max, Min, Morning, Evening), Humidity in percentage. Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.

HERE and THERE

GSP Finance Company: The fifth annual general meeting of GSP Finance Company (Bangladesh) Limited (GSPB) was held recently at the company's head office at Sena Kalyan Bhaban in the city, says a press release.

Rahman Sonet, sports & cultural secretary: Krishibid M Sohrab Hossain, treasurer: Krishibid M Abul Hossain, members: Krishibid Pulak Kanti Barua, Krishibid Shamol Barua, Krishibid Shah M Zahidul Islam Chowdhury, Krishibid A K M Yousoof Harun, Krishibid Dr A Mannan Miah, Krishibid Dr M Tareque Hossain, Krishibid M Ahsanul Haque.

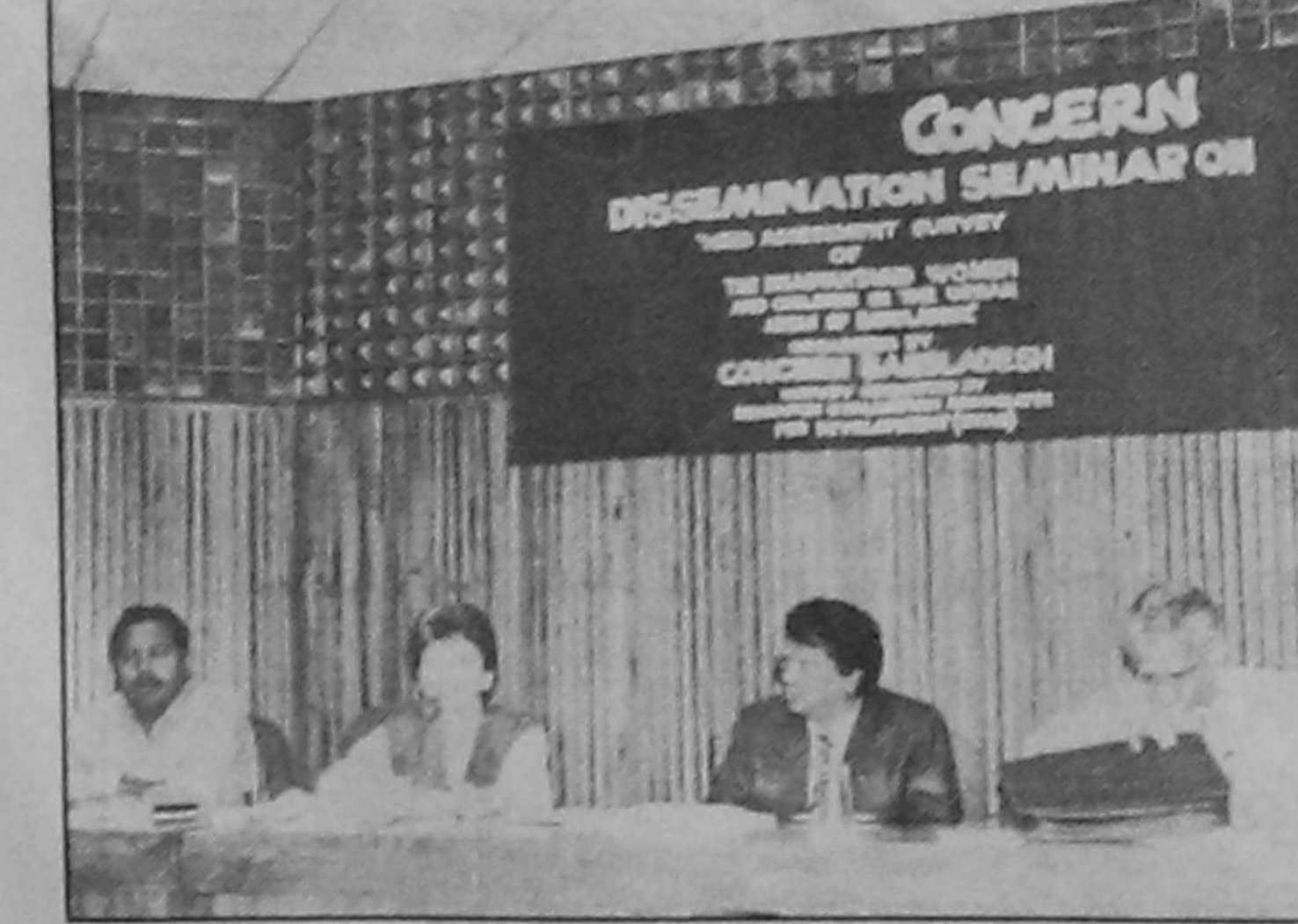
BCCP: The third annual general meeting of Bangladesh Centre for Communication Programmes (BCCP) at the Hotel Furbani International in the city on March 10. A fifteen-member executive committee for BCCP was elected, says a press release.

Office bearers elected are: Dr Kazi Ali Azam president, Dr Nazim Uddin vice-president, Dr Sukumar Sarker, vice-presidents, Khondokar Aminul Hoque, general secretary, Rehana Akhter, treasurer, Dr M Golam Mostofa, assistant general secretary, AK Shaheque Rahman, secretary IEC, Aminul Arefin, secretary, resource generation, members: Dr Sanwanul Bari, Mamtaj Shirin, Shaheed Hossain, Dr ABM Akhter Hamid, Khodeza Bilkis, Selina Chowdhury, Rehan Uddin Ahmed.

The day-long programme ended with an attractive raffle draw and colourful cultural function.



The newly-elected office-bearers of the Bangladesh Centre for Communications Programme (BCCP).



Concern Bangladesh, an Ireland-based International NGO organised a dissemination seminar, 'Need Assessment Survey of the Disadvantaged Women and Children in the Urban Areas of Bangladesh' on March 13 at IDB Bhavan Auditorium. The survey was conducted by Research Evaluation Associates for Development (READ) to have an insight into the conditions of sex workers, street children and persons with disabilities in eight urban areas of Bangladesh.



Nahid Ali Sultan, Charge d'Affaires of Iraq, addressing a discussion on "UN Sanctions Violate Universal Declaration of Human Rights" on Tuesday at a city hotel. — Star photo

HC verdict on eviction of sex workers Leaders of Human Rights organisations welcome

Leaders of human rights organisations came up with a mixed reaction after the High Court yesterday declared the eviction of sex workers from Tanbazar-Nimtoli brothels and putting a part of them into vagrant home unlawful, reports UNB. Sigma Huda, secretary general of Bangladesh Society for Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR), observed that the judgement is the recognition of the sex workers and their rights to movement and right to choice. "The judgement is a dynamic in accordance with the constitution... right to law, right to freedom and right to movement," she said.

Executive Director of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association Salma Ali, however, said keeping them free would raise social problems, as they could not be rehabilitated to their original homes. "We know that the eviction is illegal, but we want prostitution to be reduced with the passage of time by rehabilitating them," she said. She, however, mentioned that judgement was not gone in favour of the eviction, as it could not be proved. When asked, Sigma Huda, the petitioner's counsel, said they have to depend on the newspaper clippings due to absence of compliant from the landlord, and the government, and police denied their act saying that they have only picked up few vagrant women roaming around at that time.

When asked about to go to the Civil Court for the possession of homes of the sex workers, Sigma Huda said she has to go through the documents for this purpose, and needs to get feedback from the landlords. Five human rights organisations, including BSEHR, BN-WLA, Nari Pakkha and Ain-o-Shalish Kendra, filed the writ petition challenging wholesale eviction of sex workers of Tanbazar and Nimtoli and sent a part of them to government vagrant home on August 1, 1999. Thousands of sex workers were evicted from Tanbazar and Nimtoli brothels of Narayanganj on July 24 and of them 267 were sent to government vagrant homes at Kashemur. The High Court today declared the profession of sex workers "not illegal" and their eviction from Tanbazar-Nimtoli brothels unlawful.

Need for common framework for environment management stressed

Speakers at a workshop on 'Bangladesh Environment Operation Strategy' yesterday emphasised the need for finding a common framework to optimise the country's environment management operation, reports BSS. A sustainable environmental protection and enhancement pathway is yet to be in place. It is essential that all the environment-focused agencies within the government and outside as well as all the bilateral and multilateral donors must work in a common framework for waste minimisation and effective output, they opined.

Referring to the Goral river restoration project funded by the government and the World Bank, Dr Huda said donors were not initially interested in such projects considering the size and involvement. But later, the project was undertaken which upgraded the environment of south-eastern region of the country. Dr Huda said called upon the donors to work for managing river erosion which is one of the major environment related problems in the country making thousands of people homeless and creating new slums every year. All coastal zone management projects must be integrated for better output and reduce wastage. Dr Huda said and asked the environment related agencies to undertake projects that affecting life and living of the country's people. Dr ATM Shamsul Huda called upon the environment-focused donors to undertake

environment management projects in a coordinated way considering the dire necessity of addressing the issue. All operational agencies must prioritise their projects on the basis of reality whether the project is big or small, he said. Dr Saphiphat said adding that ADB is helping Bangladesh to preserve its environment heritage and improve the well being of its people through better environmental management. Dr Q K Ahmed identified major environmental problems faced by Bangladesh include severe population pressure, natural calamities, arsenic contamination of ground water, depletion of forests, declining yields of capture fishery, water and air pollution, and global warming. The workshop splits into five technical sessions including an opening, which would be chaired by Prof A K Azad Chowdhury, Dr Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, Prof Iqbal Mahmud, Dr Ian Swingland, Prof K B Sajjadur Rasheed and Dr A M A Muhi. About 60 participants from government, donors and NGOs are taking part in the workshop.

HC: Eviction of sex workers

From Page 1 workers and putting a part of them into the government vagrant homes are without lawful authority and without any sanction of law," the court said in its verdict. The sex workers were evicted in the early hours of July 24 last year. A division bench of the High Court comprising Justice Mohammad Fazul Karim and Justice Mohammad Abdul Wahab Miah delivered the judgement. The writ petition challenging the wholesale eviction was filed on August 1, 1999 by five human rights organisations. The petition was moved by advocate Sigma Huda while Deputy Attorney General Obaidur Rahman Mustafa with assistant attorney general Mushiqr Rahman Khan contested the rule for the government. Although the judgement le-

galised the profession, sex workers have to continue legal battle for the possession of their deserted homes. The court observed that there is no scope of restoring the possession of the evicted sex workers of Tanbazar and Nimtoli in writ jurisdiction. Rather, the evicted women can go to the appropriate forum (Civil Court) to get back the possession of their homes. The court also observed that the profession of sex workers is not illegal since they do it to earn a living and they could not be rehabilitated if they desired. Otherwise, they should not be forced to stop doing their job. It directed the home secretary, the social welfare secretary and the director general of social services to release immediately the sex workers of Tanbazar and Nimtoli who are being held in the government vagrant homes. A copy of the judgement was sent to them for necessary action. The court observed that the right to life, as guaranteed by the Constitution under article 31, could be treated as the right to livelihood, which is a fundamental right that cannot be taken away except in accordance with due process of law. "The right to livelihood of the sex workers is enforceable as a fundamental right." The High Court further held that eviction of the sex workers was carried out with the help of the police at the insistence of a vested "corner." "No code of conduct as to how police will act has yet been formulated by the government in spite of earlier findings by the same bench in connection with another writ petition," the court said. The court said attempted rehabilitation of sex workers of Daulatdia and Rajbari by the government should be done with their consent. "Sex workers, being citizens of the country, are having freedom of movement and their rights of movement should not be curtailed by confining them to the vagrant home or any other forcible means." The court reprimanded Narayanganj district administration, including police, for their "failure to act for which they are entrusted with."

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Milad Mahfil

A milad mahfil for late Ahsan Ahmed (Babu), son of late Moslehuddin Ahmed of Village: Barrah (Deputy Bari), P.S. Nabagonj, Dhaka, ex-student of Dhaka University and former Managing Consultant of ICL — the foremost British Computer Manufacturer in London, will be held today after Magrib prayers at 16/4 Rankin Street, Wari, says a press release. Ahsan Ahmed died of cardiac arrest on February 6 and was laid to rest of February 11 at Merton & Sutton Cemetery, Garth Road, Morden, Surrey, London (UK). He left behind his widow, a son, a daughter and a host of relatives and friends to mourn his death.

Qulkhwani

The qulkhwani of Farhana Sultana Nipun, daughter of noted businessman and JSD leader late Belayet Hossain Chowdhury, will be held today after Asr prayers at her residence at House No 8-A/3, Block-C, Tajmahal Road in Mohammodpur city. Farhana died of cardiac arrest on March 13 last. She was 23. Friends, relatives and admirers have been requested to attend the qulkhwani and pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

Sharif's lawyers return to trial

KARACHI, Mar 14: After two days of pleading, deposed premier Nawaz Sharif today told the court that his lawyers have agreed to end their boycott and defend him in his hijacking trial, reports AP. Judge Rehmetullah Hussein adjourned the proceedings until Monday to give Sharif's lawyers time to meet their client and prepare their closing arguments, which they will give next week.

Security guard

Clinton will go to the PM's Office straight from the airport in a motorcade. However, he will go to the airport from Tejgaon Helipad by a special chopper when he leaves that night. He will also fly by helicopter to the National Mausoleum in Savar and return to the capital. Clinton will travel to Joyshpur village from the mausoleum in a motorcade. He will also travel by car to the Bangabhaban from the Hotel Sonargaon to attend a banquet in the evening. The SSF and other security forces along with Clinton's personal security, will have a motorcade rehearsal. Only people with special passes issued by the Special Branch will be allowed into the areas where Clinton will be at the time. However, members of the US delegation will use their own passes and stickers. With a control cell monitoring the entire security measures, fire stations will be on red alert for any emergency. A combined Military Hospital will be fully prepared. However preparations at the Cardiovascular Hospital, have been cancelled. The Power Development Board and DESA have already taken foolproof measures to ensure an uninterrupted power supply. A cell has also been monitoring the weather conditions and will be sending special weather bulletins around the clock.

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Death anniversary of Dr Aleem-AI Razeed today

The 15th death anniversary of Dr Aleem-AI Razeed, noted politician, jurist, educationist and social reformer, who died 15 years ago on March 15, will be observed today with due solemnity, reports UNB. Throughout his chequered life spanning over 61 years, Dr Razeed championed the cause of democracy and advocated the rights of the oppressed, waging a relentless struggle to foster rule of law, justice and equality in society. Discussion meetings on the life and works of Razeed will be organised, among others, by Sandhani National Eye Donation Society, Tangail Zila Samity, City Law College, Nagarpur Government College (founded by Razeed), Dr Aleem Al Razeed High School, Lawhati, Tangail, Nari Mukti Sangsad, Bangladesh Peoples League and Bandhan Blood Donation Society. Dr Aleem-AI Razeed Memorial Council will place wreaths and offer fatiha at Razeed's graveyard in Banani, feed orphans and hold milad mahfil today.

Clinton: Itinerary

Clinton would only like to see the projects run by Grameen Bank and BRAC. It was learnt that the US President was "very keen" to meet Grameen Bank chief Dr Yunus and see at least one project in Grameen's home ground. Clinton and Hillary have publicly admired micro-credit programmes in Bangladesh run by NGOs and have made frequent mention of Dr Yunus in this regard. Clinton's meet the press programme is likely to take place at a change venue now. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina along with her team will hold talks with President Clinton and his team. The talks are expected to last for an hour, to be preceded by a customary tete-a-tete. No joint communiqué will be issued at the end of the visit. Leader of the Opposition Begum Khaleda Zia would have a 25-minute meeting with the US President at his Songargaon Hotel suite. The proposal of conferring Honorary Doctorate degree on Clinton by Dhaka University could not be confirmed. Responding to a question in this regard, the foreign secretary said the US President is yet to approve it. He is expected to be present at the signing of three PSCs with US oil companies prior to the official talks. Sources said that government was unhappy over some of the changes in the programme and were "still insisting" that the US side keeps the programmes proposed by it. At the briefing after day's interval, the foreign secretary said Clinton's visit is a testimony to the importance of the United States attaches to Bangladesh, a democratic and a peace-loving country. "We are deeply committed to peace at home, in the region and in the global arena at large." Karl Inderfurth, US Assistant Secretary of State, at a briefing in Washington recently said Clinton's main objective to visit Bangladesh will be "to recognise, reciprocate, and reinforce a tradition of friendship and cooperation with Bangladesh." Inderfurth termed Bangladesh as "one of the leading moderate Muslim democracies in the world."

E-com: Policy support

line with their goals and resources. Educational institutions should have e-commerce in their curriculum and that government should have long term commitment towards e-commerce. Tarun Mitra, Managing Director of Apteck (wos) Bangladesh Ltd said e-commerce has gained popularity as it facilitates customised products. Dell Computer enables customers to select a machine according to the configuration he or she wants on its e-commerce site and then place an on-line order. Millions of consumers can enter a shop set up on the Net any time, which would have required hundreds of shopkeepers and a number of retail outlets. Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, President of Chittagong Stock Exchange, said Bangladesh Telephone and Telegraph (BTTB) has to be a part of the process for the development of IT and e-commerce in Bangladesh. The slow speed is holding us back from getting into international gateway. The lines have to be converted into digital ones to get a faster speed, he said. R M Khan, former president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said e-commerce is getting momentum everyday and the country should have an e-commerce strategy to take a position in the world market. "Unless banking sector reforms take place, it will be very difficult to do anything," Khan said. Abdullah H Kafi, President of Bangladesh Computer Samity, echoed the statement of

R M Khan, saying that the country will not gain anything unless and until banking reforms take place. "It will take at least two more years for us to be able to derive benefits considerably from e-commerce." S M Kamal, Chairman of Bangladesh Association for Software Information Service (BASIS), underscored the need for allowing private sector in the telecommunication. He said the BTTB's role in telecommunication should be minimised. "We need to have telephone connections and internet facility. If you do not have an e-mail address, most foreigners will not be interested in doing business with you," said Kamal. He, however, said e-commerce would take off in the country despite all odds when a businessman will find that he is earning more by adopting this new technology. Abdur Rahman Khan, who is in charge of Customs Administration Modernisation (CAM-1) Project of National Board of Revenue, said the country will be marginalised if it does not take the advantage of e-commerce. "India will sell goods to the world buying those from Bangladesh." Mustafa Rafiqul Islam, Managing Director of Flora Systems Ltd., said on-line banking has to be addressed. "Digital transaction and its security are the fundamental issues regarding e-commerce." He said 500 Flower, a lower selling company on the Internet, had 3.5 million hits on the Mothers Day in 1997 and received 10,000 orders, which was only possible on the Net. "A retail outlet would never be able to handle such a huge traffic on a day," Islam pointed out, explaining the benefit of e-commerce.

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Cabinet okays 3 PSCs

has opened up a pretext to award Block 9 to Tullow by tagging two American companies with it," he observed. Tullow's original proposal, which was the official reason for selecting the Irish company as the best bidder for the block, has been drastically modified now. Earlier, Tullow had offered to drill 10 exploratory wells in the first three years. Now, the PSC seeks to drill three exploratory wells only. The PSC for Block 7 to be signed with Unocal has been termed "meaningless" by some oil sector experts. In its original proposal, Unocal had committed to drill three wells and conduct seismic survey in the block in the first three years. But in the PSC, it is no longer a commitment. "It is strange that we are signing this PSC with Unocal for Block 7, which is basically a five-year lease for nothing," commented an expert. The only PSC which stuck to the original proposals is the one being signed with Pangaea. Being the lone bidder for Block 8, Pangaea had proposed to invest some 13 million US dollars in the three-year Initial Operation Period (IOP) to conduct seismic survey in 800 km area and drill one exploratory well. The PSC would have two-year extension twice if operations are successful. Unocal, Shell, Ocean Energy, UMC, Tullow, Okland and Cairn are already operating in blocks 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 23 under PSCs. Among these companies, Cairn discovered the Sangu gas field in 1996. This field is now operated by Shell. Unocal (formerly Occidental) developed the Jalalabad Gas Field (discovered by Schimtar in late eighties) and discovered the Bibiyana gas field. Sangu and Jalalabad fields are now supplying gas to the national grid. The other oil companies are yet to make any breakthrough in their exploration activities. Backed by the World Bank, the oil companies are now putting pressure on the government to allow them to export gas to India.

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ZIA shut down

The airport resumed operations at 1:54 pm. Sixteen flights landed yesterday. The first to land was on an Aeroflot flight from Moscow. Total chaos prevailed at the airport when the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh failed to clear the runway after the incident. Authority technicians managed to tow the aircraft to a hangar. Authority personnel refused to discuss the incident. The people who answered the telephone at the authority's security section at 8:30 pm hung up. Malaysian Airline officials were not available for comment. However, aviation sources said a team of Malaysian Airlines technicians arrived in Dhaka from Singapore last night. They are expected to fix the wheels. Flight MH 197 should leave at 8 am today. Bangladesh Biman's scheduled flights were delayed or diverted to Sylhet and Chittagong. Flights from Jeddah and London landed at Chittagong Airport in the morning and returned in the afternoon. Saudia flight SD 804, which went to Bangkok and Kuwait Airways KU 281, which diverted to Calcutta, are expected to land at 12:30 pm and 6:30 am respectively, sources said. A British Airways flight, which could land on Monday afternoon due to bad weather, landed yesterday afternoon.

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Road mishaps

Kazipara graveyard in Sujanagar thana yesterday. Witnesses and police said the Ishwardi-bound night coach from Dhaka overturned on Pabna-Nagarbari highway after its driver braked hard as two cows came onto the road in front of him at about 1.30 am. Two of the passengers who were travelling on the rooftop of the bus and its driver died on the spot. Three others succumbed to their injuries at Sujanagar Hospital. The dead were identified as Monnu, 40, Abdul Aziz, 50, Abdul Hye, 25, of Banagram village and Abdul Hamid, 50 and Mannaf, 40 of Hudarpara village in Sujanagar thana and bus driver Jan Mohammad, 42, of Shahjadpur thana. Of the injured, 17 were admitted to Pabna General Hospital and Sujanagar Health Complex in critical condition. Passengers alleged that some local people looted their valuables after the accident. In Gaibandha, two policemen were killed in a road accident at Baluaghat in Gobindaganj thana yesterday. Witnesses said constables Amir Hossain, 45 and Rezaul Karim, 45, died on the spot when a pickup van of Kalitara police collided with a truck at about 5:30 am. The bodies were sent to a local hospital for autopsy. Police arrested the truck driver and seized the truck.

musclemen brought from Rajstan in India. Traders at Gabtoli said unlike in previous years, several hundred camels have been brought this year. Many of the camels at Gabtoli were seen exhausted and bearing signs of long and arduous journey. The asking price of a camel, colourfully garlanded and decorated with clothes was Tk 75,000 at Gabtoli market. A curious crowd gathered around the desert ship. Asking prices of average bulls at different city markets ranged from Tk 10,000 to 20,000. Traders said the prices rallied around last year's. "Rearing sacrificial animals is no longer a lucrative business. Cattle feeds are expensive, grazing spaces are hard to find and at the end, the mastans take away our hard earned money," a farmer who reared 20 bulls over the last one year told this correspondent at Kamalpur cattle market yesterday.

Opinion Poll

stopover has undermined the image of Bangladesh. However, the majority, 58.1 per cent, thinks that we should not debate on this, rather we should accept it as is. Finally, it has been discussed widely in Bangladesh press that President Clinton would request the government of Bangladesh to allow trade union activities in export processing zones (EPZ). The poll found that Dhaka people are divided on this issue. Of the respondents, 53.9 per cent think that labour union activities should be allowed in EPZ areas since it was a basic right of the workers. On the other hand, 46.1 per cent think that the idea of allowing union activities in EPZ areas would not be good for Bangladesh. The margin of error in all the questions is 4 per cent.

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