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# ADB to increase its loan to \$500m next year

## Partnership accord on poverty reduction

Bangladesh and the Asian Development Bank signed a partnership agreement on poverty reduction yesterday, providing enhanced ADB lending, up to US dollar 500 million per annum, reports UNB.

Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria and visiting ADB President Tadao Chino signed the agreement on the respective sides.

Economic Relations Division Secretary Dr Mashur Rahman and ADB resident representative in Bangladesh Phiphit Saphaphat were present in the signing ceremony.

Under the deal, ADB will attempt to maintain an average annual lending level in the range of US dollar 400-500 million, including an Asian Development Fund component of US dollar 350-400 million, up from US dollar 200-350 million in the previous years.

The lending will be subject to resource availability, country performance, portfolio performance and the assistance provided by other donors.

According to the agreement, the ADB, as a major development partner, will plan its assistance to Bangladesh in ways that support government efforts to reduce poverty, a national priority and the main thrust of the government's long-term development strategy.

ADB will programme its medium-term country assistance plan to support government's medium-term priorities for pro-poor growth, social development and good governance.

The level of assistance, the combination of Ordinary Capital Resources and ADF resources, and the sectoral and spatial composition of ADB assistance will be designed with the objectives.

To promote higher growth, the Bank will support the development of key infrastructures like power, gas and transportation along with policy reforms to establish an enabling environment for private-sector development.

Financial-sector reform will be critical for fostering such an environment, and support for such programme will remain a part of ADB's operational programme.

To make growth more pro-poor, the Asian Bank will support the liberalisation of factor markets and also adopt an area approach, targeting its assistance to areas of high poverty concentration.

In the social sector, the Bank will target reducing human poverty, especially with an emphasis on women and children, which will include projects in primary, secondary and non-formal education.



Asian Development Bank president Tadao Chino (right) called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her Parliament office yesterday. —PID photo

# China proposes to set up urea, DAP plants

China offered to set up a urea plant at a cost of about 350 million US dollars in the backward northern Bangladesh, reports UNB.

A major development partner, China is also going to set up a Dinammonium Phosphate (DAP) plant in Chittagong at a cost of 60 million dollars with an annual production capacity of 264,000 tonnes.

The plans were unveiled when a 15-member visiting Chinese delegation led by Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs Wei Jianguo met with Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed at his office in the city yesterday.

Tofail informed the delegation that the government had almost completed the process of signing a contract for construction of the DAP plant. Physical works could be started by August next.

He said the government is also negotiating with the Chinese government a number of projects.

The projects include 75 million dollar BMRE for Karnaphuli Paper Mills, 20 million dollar granular urea unit in Ashuganj Fertilizer Factory, 25 million dollar BMRE for Polish Urea Factory and 20 million dollar scheme for installation of 6 million ton capacity machines in Sylhet Pulp and Paper Mills.

The industries minister further informed that the present government is committed to setting up a urea plant immediately which involves 350 million dollars.

"We are interested in getting ISP (Interest Subsidised Preferential) loan from China for the project," he told the delegation.

Referring to Bangladesh's trade imbalance with China, Tofail said the gap is there as Bangladesh imports a wide range of goods, from heavy machinery to consumer items, from China.

"China can compensate by offering us ISP loan for our industrialisation process," he said.

Mentioning that Bangladesh has been improving a lot in agricultural production with emphasis on agro-based industries, the minister sought Chinese support as it has a vast experience in the field.

Welcoming the growing economic ties between Dhaka and Beijing, the Chinese minister said China has world-reputed corporation to set up urea factory and his country would be delighted to set up another factory in Bangladesh.

China is also very eager to participate in the BMRE projects in paper and fertilizer sectors.

# Top Bosnian warcrimes suspect arrested

PALE, (Bosnia-Herzegovina), Apr 3: NATO peacekeepers today detained a senior aide to former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, the highest-ranking suspect yet to be arrested for alleged war crimes, reports AP.

Witnesses to the arrest of Momcilo Krajsnik said NATO troops with the Bosnian peacekeeping force detained him after blowing open a door to his home in Pale, southeast of Sarajevo, with explosives. The French defense ministry in Paris said French troops made the arrest.

"They took my Dad away," Krajsnik's son Milos, 21, told the Associated Press. "Some of them spoke Serbian, some English but mostly French."

He said he managed to see seven or eight soldiers before he and his brother, Njegos, 19, were tied and their faces turned towards the floor.

Krajsnik's father, Sretko, ridiculed the force used to gain entry.

"If they had knocked on the door, I would have opened it," he told reporters on the scene.

Yugoslavia's state-run Tanjug news agency said Krajsnik was led away still in pajamas and barefoot.

Officials close to the international administrator to Bosnia-Herzegovina said Krajsnik, a former member of Bosnia's tripartite presidency, was arrested on a secret indictment and would be extradited to The Hague, Netherlands, to be tried by the UN war crimes tribunal.

The arrest, coming ahead of next weekend's Bosnian municipal elections, heightened concerns that the voting could be marred by incidents or give a boost to radical nationalist Serbs opposed to reconciliation in Bosnia.

The arrest will "radicalise the political environment," said Serb moderate Mladen Ivanic.

# Report on PSA amendment bill finalised

A Jatiya Sangsad committee yesterday finalised its report on Public Safety Act (PSA) Special Provision Amendment Bill 2000 for placing it before the parliament, reports BSS.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Home met yesterday at the Sangsad Bhawan with committee Chairman Mohammad Sayedul Haque presiding.

The bill was sent to the Committee for scrutiny by the Jatiya Sangsad.

Committee members Home, Post and Telecommunication Minister Mohammad Nasim, Chief Whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah, Whip Vice Principal Mohammad Abdus Shahid, Whip S M Mostafa Rashid Suja, Mammad Tajul Islam, Ms Zeenat Hossain, Chief Whip of the Opposition Khandokar Delwar Hossain and Hafiz Uddin Bir Bikram attended the meeting.

# Pre-budget discussion Businessmen against raising gas and fuel prices

Unethical business practices and opposition from donors could prevent the government from extending the tax breaks most companies enjoy for another five years, says Finance Minister S.A.M.S. Kibria.

"Usually, every company shows a progressive profit in their books when tax breaks are in place," said Kibria at a pre-budget meeting with chamber leaders and professional groups yesterday.

"However, in the sixth year most companies record either a loss or no profit. This is what we face in practice."

Despite the problems, Kibria assured the business leaders he would see what he could do to extend the tax breaks.

The pre-budget consultative meeting also discussed fiscal measures. Participants decided future meetings about 2000-2001 budget preparations would include business representatives.

Business leaders urged Kibria not to raise the price of gas, electricity or fuel after the budget. If the government planned to raise those prices then it should do it through the budget.

However, Kibria said it would be difficult to fix the price of fuel in the budget, since the price fluctuated year round. The government would have to use extra budgetary measures to adjust fuel prices.

The leaders also asked Kibria to rationalise the banks' lending rates, since they weren't commensurate with the inflation rate and make the tax collection system more transparent, accountable and hassle-free.

Abdul Mueed Chowdhury, chairman of the National Board of Revenue, Mahbubur Rahman, president of the Bangladesh branch of the International Chamber of Commerce, Latifur Rahman, president of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Khondokar Mosharrar Hossen, president of the Bangladesh Chamber of Industries and Benazir Ahmed, vice-president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association attended the meeting.

Representatives from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh, the Institute of Cost Management Accountants of Bangladesh, the Tax Lawyers Association, the Sylhet Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Khulna Chamber of Commerce and Industry also attended.

# ADB chief meets PM, praises reform measures

Visiting Asian Development Bank president Tadao Chino called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her Sangsad Bhawan office yesterday and assured to increase ADB assistance to Bangladesh, reports UNB.

"We'll try to enhance the overall lending programme in Bangladesh," he said, praising the government's economic reform programmes and special schemes for poverty alleviation.

"Your government shares our view about poverty reduction" and added that the ADB has given special emphasis on poverty-alleviation.

Mentioning the agreement on poverty reduction partnership with Bangladesh, he said this agreement is a formal beginning of ADB's new poverty reduction strategy with overall focus on eradication of extreme poverty from Asia and Pacific in partnership with governments of its developing member countries.

The prime minister said the government has initiated reform programmes in Bangladesh and expected these reforms to have objective considerations of the development partners.

"Our country should be taken into account when initiative of reforms is taken by the development partners," she added.

# A rare gesture towards political opponents

CHITTAGONG, Apr 3: In a rare gesture, the ruling party-administered CCC gave a facelift to the port city and beautified the venue of tomorrow's joint public meeting of the Opposition Alliance, reports UNB.

Chittagong City Corporation, under the leadership of Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, also the city Awami League leader, took massive preparations so that the opposition can hold the meeting "nicely and successfully".

CCC's Conservancy Department completed earth filling in the dilapidated outer-stadium and repaired the roads to the venue for smooth run of the vehicles carrying the leaders.

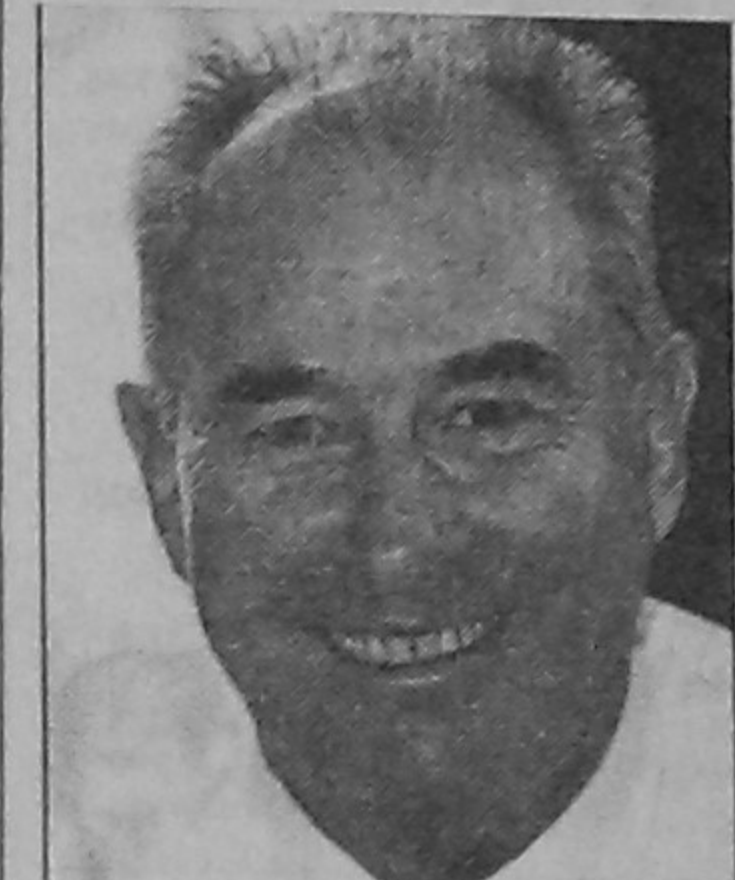
Sixty labourers of the corporation worked from 6 am to 2 pm today, filling up potholes in the stadium and on roads, sprayed water to control dust and refurbishing all the lighting facilities.

Latrines were repaired, dirt was cleaned and bleaching powder and aerosol were also sprayed on the meeting spot.

Chief Conservancy Officer of CCC, Saifuddin Mohammad Kabeeli, told UNB that the department did it all "at the directive of the city mayor".

The CCC will spray water all around the meeting venue tomorrow to control dust.

CMP commissioner AT Ahmedul Haq said some 3,000 BDR, armed police and police would be deployed in the city tomorrow.



McKinnon takes office as new C'wealth chief

LONDON, Apr 3: The new secretary-general of the Commonwealth, Don McKinnon, took office today with a traditional Maori welcome ceremony at the organisation's headquarters in London, reports AFP.

McKinnon, a former New Zealand foreign minister, takes over from outgoing Commonwealth chief Emeke Anyaoku of Nigeria, who has led the 54-member body for the past decade.

He has served as deputy chairman of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, which is increasingly seen as the organisation's cutting edge, since its inception in 1995.

McKinnon was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1998 for his part in resolving a bloody Pacific island dispute between Bougainvilleans and the Papua New Guinea government.

Earlier, the body of the deceased was kept for a few hours at his residence at Gulshan-2. Some ministers, high officials, business leaders, friends and relatives went there to have a last glimpse.

Bishal, 19, was a BBA student in the United States. He was in good health but suddenly fell sick on Saturday night, complaining of headache. He was rushed to Japan - Bangladesh Friendship Hospital. Doctors examined him and on their advice, he was shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

The quikhwani of Bishal will be held today after Maghreb prayers at House No: 6, Road No: 69, Gulshan-2.

# Sharif's trial: Security stepped up ahead of verdict Thursday

KARACHI, Apr 3: Additional police have been deployed in southern Karachi as a precautionary measure ahead of Thursday's verdict and sentencing in the hijacking trial of deposed prime minister Nawaz Sharif, reports AP.

Sharif and his six coaccused could face the death penalty if convicted on charges of hijacking, terrorism, attempted murder and kidnapping.

Today Sunday police chief Aftab Nabi said additional policemen and paramilitary Rangers have been deployed throughout the port city, the country's largest with 14 million people.

"Reserve police have been called in, while men have been taken off nonessential duty to make sure we have the maximum number of policemen on duty," he said. "These measures are always taken during high alert situation."

As well additional protection has been given to the anti-terrorist court judge Rehmetullah Hussain Jaffri, he said.

Last month one of Sharif's lawyers was gunned down in his office in a brazen daylight attack. No one took responsibility for the shooting, but other defense lawyers demanded additional protection following the killing. No one has been arrested in the killing and it's still not clear whether it was linked to Sharif's trial.

Police say they will also prevent demonstrations by supporters of Sharif, whose government was toppled by the military in a bloodless coup last year. The army-led government has banned public gatherings, but Sharif's party, the Pakistan Muslim League has threatened to defy the ban and hold protests.

"The government should know that we are not afraid of anyone. We will fight for democracy," the English-language daily newspaper the News quoted Sharif's wife, Khulsoom as saying.

# Even Clinton's car spews smoke

LAS VEGAS (Nevada), Apr 3: Even presidential limousines fall prey to mechanical problems.

The Cadillac of US President Bill Clinton, which broke down twice before, began to spew smoke as Clinton was en route to a Nevada golf course, reports AFP.

Clinton was in Las Vegas, the world gambling capital, for two fundraisers with rich Democratic contributors that raised a reported 500,000 dollars for his party.

The secret service, which provides security for the president, stopped the presidential motorcade and led Clinton to a second limousine.

The X-ray department however, also resumed operations from Monday evening.

# A surprise Pak gesture to India

ISLAMABAD, Apr 3: In a surprise gesture to hostile neighbour India, Pakistan's army-led government approved a pipeline from Iran, across Pakistan to supply gas to India, Jehangir Bashir, a Petroleum Ministry spokesman said today, reports AP.

"It will be an onshore pipeline and Pakistan will get transit fees for providing passage," said Bashir.

Project details were scarce and Bashir said it was too early to say when construction on the pipeline would begin. Petroleum industry officials say Pakistan could make millions of dollars in transit fees.

Cooperation is rare for Pakistan and India, uneasy neighbours who have fought three wars since 1947 when British rule of the subcontinent ended and Pakistan was created as a homeland for Muslims of the region.

The agreement to let the pipeline run through Pakistan is considered a major gesture by the country's army ruler Gen Pervez Musharraf.

# Terrorist killed in exchange of fire with police

CHITTAGONG, Apr 3: A terrorist was killed and another was injured in an exchange of fire with police at Madarbari in the city Sunday midnight, reports UNB.

Bandar and Doublemooring police faced a barrage of gunfire when they jointly raided a den of drunks at Madarbari. Police returned the fire in which Razzak and Manik were wounded.

After exchange of fire that continued for 30 minutes, police succeeded in capturing bullet wounded Razzak and Manik who were rushed to the hospital. Manik succumbed to his injuries at 1 am today.

A case was registered with the police.

# X-ray machine gutted at DMCH

By staff correspondent

An inoperative machine and other valuables of the X-ray room at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital were gutted in a fire yesterday afternoon.

According to Fire Brigade sources, the fire might have originated from an electric short circuit of the control box of X-ray room which damaged an inoperative X-ray machine and other valuables. Fire Brigade sources could not give an estimate of the extent of loss of property.

The X-ray department however, also resumed operations from Monday evening.

# Young man shot dead

By Staff Correspondent

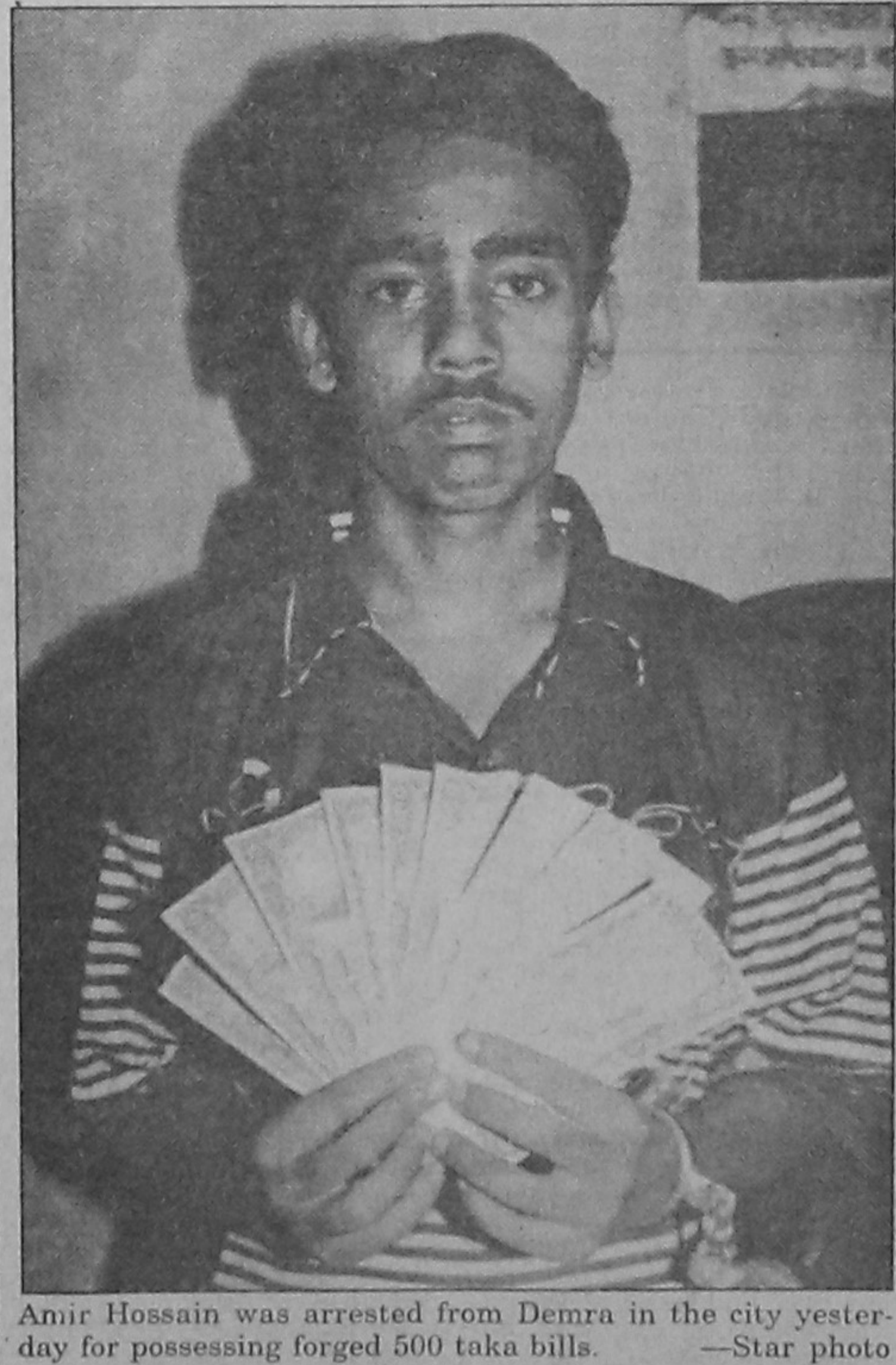
Armed miscreants shot dead a former BCL leader of Titumir College in the city's South Badda yesterday.

Police and hospital sources quoting relatives said Mobarak Hossain Hira, 25, son of Tajul Islam and a resident of GP Mohakhall in Gulshan left his residence with his friend, Sukkur Ali, at about 7 p.m. on Sunday.

Hira's father came to know at about 3 p.m. that his son was lying unconscious near Balir Char mosque. He and other relatives of Hira rushed there only to find him dead.

Police recovered the body with bullet injury in the chest and head and sent it to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

The victim's father filed a case with Gulshan thana accusing Ratu, Mirab Dulal, Tuhin and Nishu of the murder.



Amir Hossain was arrested from Demra in the city yesterday for possessing forged 500 taka bills. —Star photo

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