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Gangsters prevent dropping of tenders at Nagar Bhaban

By Staff Correspondent

Several gangsters of 'Five Star' group, who enjoy the blessings of political high ups, occupied the office of the DCC Executive Engineer at the Nagar Bhaban yesterday and prevented contractors from dropping tenders.

Yesterday was the last date for dropping tenders for a project.

The gangsters entered the Nagar Bhaban (DCC office) at about 8 am. Some of them occupied the office of Executive Engineer Nurul Ameen and prevented the contractors from dropping tenders for a project involving Tk 20 lakh.

Day before yesterday, the same gang chased the contractors who came to drop tenders for another project involving Tk 1.40 crore.

The incidents created tension at the Nagar Bhaban.

When reporters from several dailies went there yesterday, the armed gangsters became angry and tried to intimidate them. Firearms tucked inside.

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Opposition won't accept unilateral appointment of CEC, President told

Govt blamed for foiling dialogue

By Staff Correspondent

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia met President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed last night and discussed appointment of a new chief election commissioner on the basis of consensus.

"Begum Zia told the President that the Opposition would not accept any CEC appointed unilaterally by the government," BNP Secretary General who accompanied her told newsmen after the hour-long meeting at Bangabhaban.

"She also told the President that the new CEC, to be appointed in consultation with the opposition, would not hold any elections before the next parliamentary polls," Replying to another query.

Mannan Bhuiyan said that they clearly communicated to the President that the ruling party was not sincere about any dialogue. "We explained to the President how the ruling party foiled the proposed dialogue between the second tier of leadership of both the sides."

Bhuiyan refused to disclose what the President told Khaleda Zia.

Khaleda Zia met the President after talks with chiefs of three other parties of the BNP-led four party alliance, held at her official residence.

Earlier in the evening, the four-party accused the government of foiling the proposed dialogue between the ruling party and the Opposition on appointment of a new CEC.

"The government never meant a dialogue with the Opposition on the issue. It is the Finance Minister who made an unilateral announcement negating the proposed dialogue," BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told newsmen emerging from a meeting of chiefs of the four component parties of the alliance.

"Had the Prime Minister been sincere about holding talks with Begum Zia, she would not have asked the leader of the Opposition to meet her in a few hours' time for the meeting," Bhuiyan said.

"Had she meant talks with the Leader of the Opposition, the Prime Minister should have..."

See page 11 col 4

Power tariff for DESA, REB may go up

By Sharier Khan

The Power Development Board (PDB) is drafting a proposal to increase power tariff for bulk consumers like DESA and REB by 28 poisha per kilowatt hour to make power sale profitable.

The proposal is however not aimed at increasing power tariff at end-consumer level, but at establishing a justified price for PDB's bulk power sale, sources said.

The Energy Ministry designs power tariff as per World Bank (WB) recommendation. The WB suggests increase in power tariff every six months to adjust it to taka devaluation against dollar. The last increase was in September.

PDB says it is being forced to sell power to DESA (Dhaka Electric Supply Authority), DESCO (Dhaka Electric Supply Company) and REB (Rural Electrification Board) at an 'irrationally low tariff' making it incur huge loss.

"Virtually, PDB is subsidising DESA, DESCO and REB. When donors are continuously pressing us to be competitive, we are actually sticking to an irrational pricing and selling power to DESA, DESCO and REB at a price much lower than production and distribution cost," said a source.

While its production and distribution cost (up to bulk consumers) is Tk 2.4 per kilowatt hour (or one unit), it is selling power at Tk 1.84 per unit to DESA and DESCO and at Tk 1.77 to REB, the source said. However, PDB's average power tariff stands at Tk 2.2 (which includes sales to commercial, industrial and other clients).

DESA and DESCO sell the...
See page 11 col 7

An appointment ignoring EC views

By Nurul Kabir

The government in a deviation from the usual practice appointed an additional secretary of the Election Commission Secretariat recently, ignoring the Commission's views.

Mohammad Shafiquddin, former director-general of the Land Reformation Board, took over in the post yesterday, while his predecessor at the EC Secretariat Aziz Ahmed Chowdhury has been made director-general of the Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institute. Chowdhury also joined his new office yesterday.

Due to certain complications developed over the appointment made without prior consultations with the Commission, Shafiquddin joined the EC Secretariat a couple of days after his appointment on May 14.

"The government always had consulted the Commission before appointing or transferring any high official in and from the secretariat," acting chief election commissioner Moshataq Ahmed Chowdhury told the Daily Star yesterday. "But, this time the Commission was in the dark," said Chowdhury without elaborating.

However, EC sources said that the Commission, on unofficial information about a change in the post, contacted the government asking it not to transfer Aziz Ahmed Chowdhury since it would hamper the process of preparing the fresh...

See page 11 col 5

Uttara Bank MD sued to realise Tk 16 lakh loan

By M Shamsur Rahman

The Eastern Bank Ltd (EBL) yesterday filed a case with the Third Artha Rin Adalat against one of its directors to realise Tk 15.75 lakh.

In the petition, the bank prayed for realisation of the money by selling mortgaged property of the director.

Barrister Md Abdus Samad filed the case against M Aminuzzaman, Managing Director of Uttara Bank Ltd. He represents Uttara Bank in the EBL board as shareholder.

When contacted, Aminuzzaman said he was astonished to hear filing of the case. He said he can not be asked to pay twice for a single loan.

He said he deliberately stopped payment after closure of BCCI globally as his loan was sanctioned by BCCI's London office.

Aminuzzaman said that he had submitted a form to the BCCI liquidator in London, seeking adjustment of the loan with his receivable benefits.

He also said that the bank should have approached the liquidators or filed the case much earlier as he stopped payment in early 90s.

The EBL petition said that while Aminuzzaman was an employee of now-defunct BCCI and posted in Cairo, he was sanctioned a loan of Tk 5.35 lakh in November, 1982 to purchase an apartment of Eastern Housing Ltd.

Aminuzzaman was regular in repaying the monthly instalments from 1983 to May 1991 till closure of BCCI in Dhaka. EBL was formed in 1992 under a reconstruction plan. EBL owned all assets, liabilities, agreements, bonds and other documents of BCCI in Dhaka.

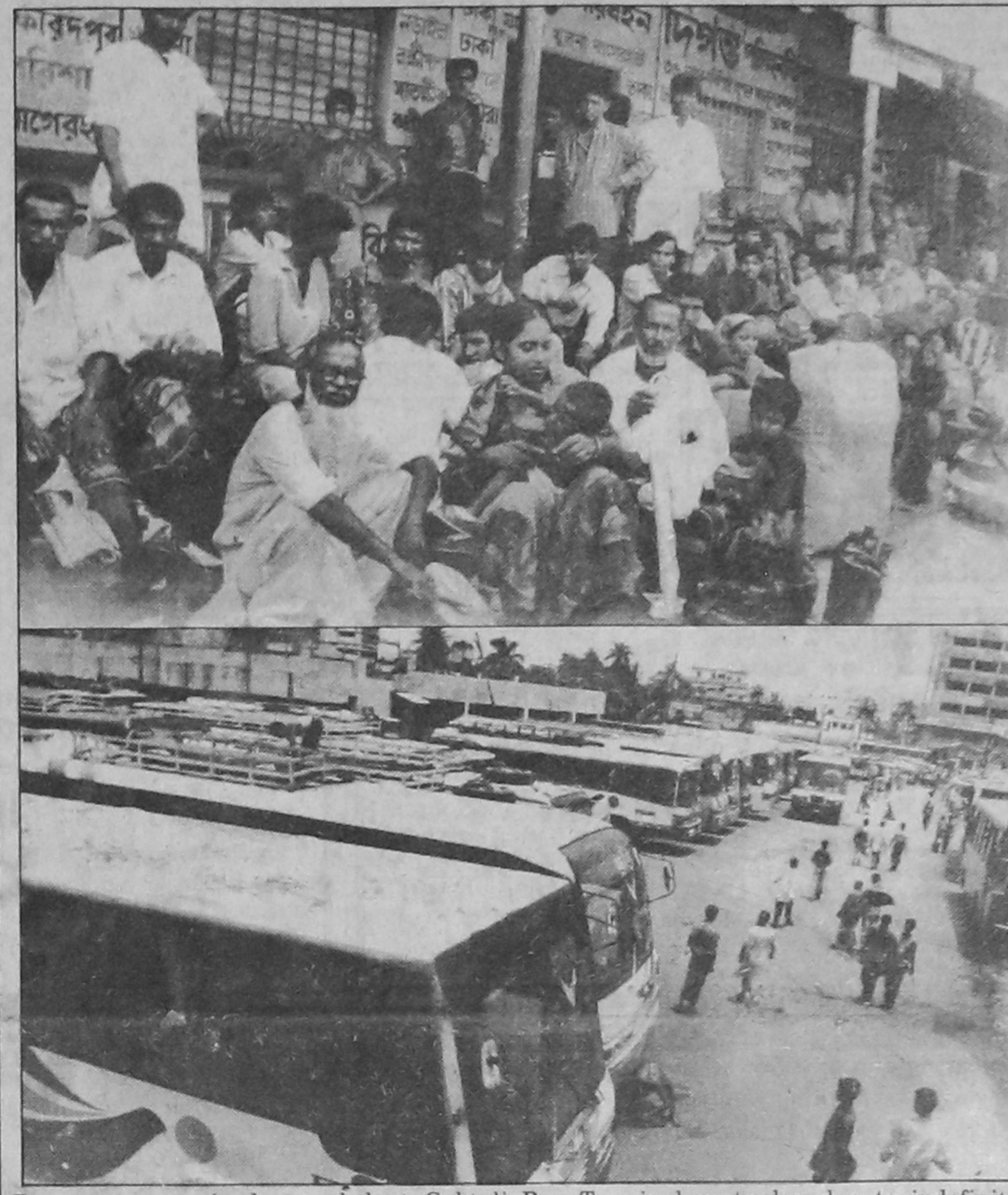
Aminuzzaman joined EBL and served as a Deputy Managing Director till December, 1995. He left the bank without adjusting his loan liability and joined Uttara Bank as managing director, the petition said.

Despite repeated reminders Aminuzzaman did not take any steps to repay the loan, it said. The central bank also directed the EBL to impress upon the borrower for recovery of the loan.

"When asked, the defendant tried to link the house building loan from Bangladesh with his service benefits receivable from the BCCI, (O) Ltd, Cairo, now under liquidation," the petition said.

The loan was given from depositors' money and has no connection with any benefits receivable.

The petition also said that prior to filing of the case, security documents and documents of equitable mortgaged property were found mysteriously missing from records. A general diary was lodged with Motijheel Police in this connection last month, it said.



Passengers remained stranded at Gabtali Bus Terminal yesterday due to indefinite transport strike (top) and North Bengal-bound buses are parked in order at the terminal. — Star photo

Strike: Thousands stranded at bus stops

By Staff Correspondent

The first day of the indefinite transport strike across the country passed off yesterday without any major incident.

The strike left hundreds of thousands of people across the country stranded at bus stops.

A faction of Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation (road transport workers' federation) led by two ruling party MPs, Wazuddin Khan and Shahjahan Khan, called the strike demanding implementation of its 11-point and four-point agreements.

Sources in transport sector claimed that the movement of traffic was almost normal across the country although some insignificant incidents took place.

The pro-strike transport workers tried to interrupt traffic movement by putting up barricade in different places in the capital and its adjoining areas including Mirpur Mazar Road, Gabtali, Aminbazar, Kanchpur, Siddhirganj and Kallakour.

"So far as we know, most of the incidents reportedly took place in the morning when workers pelted stones on the buses and trucks, but no incident occurred in the afternoon," said Khurshid Alam, one of the leaders of Bangladesh Truck Malik Samity (BTMS).

Alam also claimed that the strike had little effect on the transport sector. He hoped the traffic movement will be totally normal from today.

Meanwhile, leaders of two organisations congratulated the transport owners and workers yesterday for ignoring the strike and thus the toll-collectors and terrorists.

In a statement, BTMS lead...
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Our new numbers

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Inside Today

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Courting nuclear disaster

Pokharan-Chagai Plus-2

Praful Bidwai writes from New Delhi
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Pages 6, 7 & 8

Business

WB again advocates gas export

DSE, CSE price quotations
Pages 9 & 10

May	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
17		6:35 pm
18	5-14 am	

Prayer Timings

May 17

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-45
Zohr	1:00	1-30
Asr	5:00	5-15
Maghrib	6:35	6:38
Esha	8:00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Terrorist 'Kana' Bakkar arrested in Chittagong

From Our Correspondent

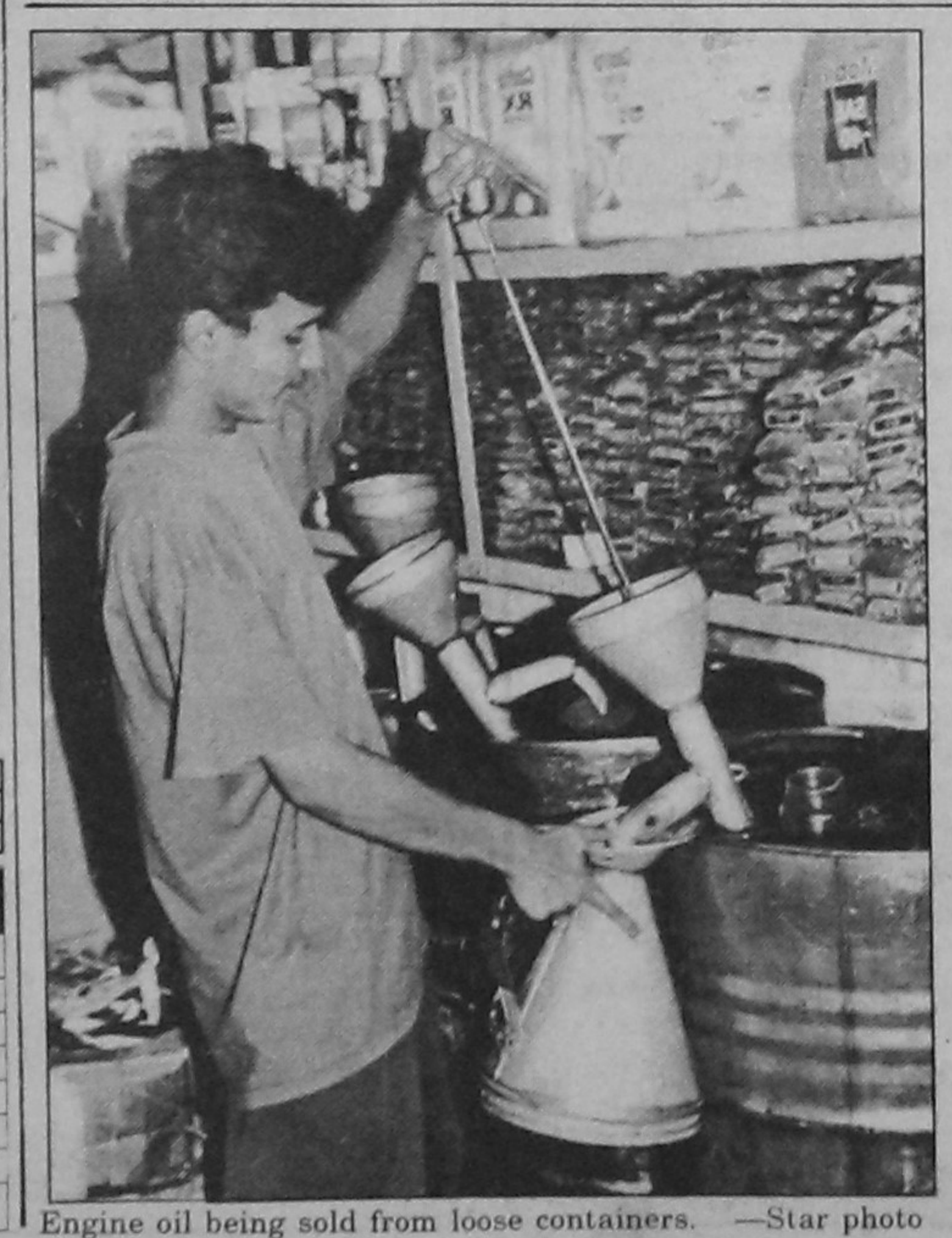
CHITTAGONG, May 16: Abu Bakkar Siddique alias 'Kana' Bakkar or KB, a listed terrorist in Lalkhan Bazar area of the city, was arrested from Badurtala under plainclothes thana last night.

Detective Branch of police led by AC Ruhul Amin arrested Bakkar from his rented house at Badurtala at around 12:30 am.

'Kana' Bakkar is an accused in 15 criminal cases, including murder, dacoity, extortion and child and women repression.

He was shown arrested in connection with a dacoity case at Reazuddin Bazar. Bakkar and his accomplices looted Tk 30 lakh from Zakir Hossain fish Godown at the bazar on April 14 last year, police said.

Bakkar, also a Jubo League leader, created a reign of terror...



Engine oil being sold from loose containers. —Star photo

SUST reopens

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, May 16: The Shahjalal University of Science & Technology reopened today after a closure of more than 3 months.

Students from across the country started coming back to their dormitories. Earlier, the Academic Council at a meeting fixed May 22 the date for semester examinations which were postponed in the months of November and December due to the agitation.

The admission tests which were scheduled for December 17 and 18 and were postponed will be held some time in the month of June, said an official.

The deadlock over naming of some buildings and dormitories in August last year continued for over seven months.

The Opposition protested the naming and launched agitation programmes.

At one stage, the varsity was closed sine die on February 23 following some untoward incidents.

Ban on sale of poor quality engine oil proposed

By Special Correspondent

The government has decided to tighten restriction on sale of poor quality engine oil in loose containers to reduce urban air pollution by two-stroke engine vehicles like auto-rickshaws.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) wrote a letter to the Energy Ministry yesterday, proposing a ban on sale of poor quality engine oil from January 1 next year.

MOEF sources said one of the major reasons for bad air quality in the urban centres, including Dhaka is use of poor quality engine oil by autorickshaws and two wheelers.

The engine oil is often recycled. It lacks proper additives and is used inefficiently by two-stroke engines, belching out heavy smokes as a result.

Only good quality engine oil in sealed containers or pouches with proper additives would be permitted to sell in the markets, the sources said.

Poor quality engine oil is also responsible for reducing the engine life of cars, buses, trucks and rickcraft.

Bhutan for direct bus link, new land route thru' India

By Diplomatic Correspondent

Dhaka and Thimpu are eyeing a direct bus service between the two capitals to increase interaction between the peoples and boost tourism.

Visiting Bhutanese foreign minister Lyonpo Jigme Thinley revealed this at a press conference at state guest house Padma yesterday. Lhatu Wangchuk, Bhutanese ambassador in Bangladesh, was present at the conference.

The Himalayan kingdom is also expecting the opening of a new overland transit route through India to Bangladesh "for easier and more economic movement" of its cargo.

Both the proposals are expected to be included in the trade agreement between Bangladesh and Bhutan in September. Dhaka and Thimpu have also agreed to renew the "mutually beneficial" trade agreement lasting 10 years. The current agreement expires on September 7.

Thinley told reporters that India has agreed to allow transit facilities through the second land route. The proposed route would be connected through Nakugon on the Bangladesh side and Dalu on the Indian side of Bhutan.

The Bhutanese foreign minister said the present route that passes through Burimari lacks necessary infrastructure and there was absence of warehouse facility, electricity or telecommunications arrangements. Besides, the Nakugon point...
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Campaign for return of Kohinoor

NEW DELHI, May 16: Indian lawmakers have launched a campaign for the return of the fabled Kohinoor diamond by Britain, saying it was forcibly taken from an Indian maharajah during colonial rule, reports Reuters.

Kuldip Nayar, a member of the upper house of parliament and a former High Commissioner to Britain, told Reuters today he had moved a motion in the upper house for the return of the Kohinoor and other relics by Britain.

"We have also written a letter to the prime minister urging him to take up the issue of the Kohinoor with the British premier. Twenty-five members of parliament from both houses and cutting across party lines have signed the letter," he said.

British curators say the Kohinoor, considered among the largest diamonds in the world, was given to the British monarch in the 19th century by an Indian maharajah.

"We understand from the...
See page 11 col 6

Rajuk in dilemma over 100 'illegal' building plans

By Staff Correspondent

Rajuk is yet to decide on whether to reject or approve more than 100 plans, which were "illegally" approved by a "organised gang" operating inside Rajuk.

Most of these fake approvals of building plans allowed construction of multi-storey commercial buildings at different critical spots in the city. Some constructions have been completed while many others are in the process of construction.

Rajuk sources said unless the government acts immediately to stop those constructions, these buildings would create serious environmental degradation in the city. They said punishing only the culprits would not solve the problem since a "huge damage has been inflicted to the city's planning".

At least six top Rajuk officials are currently under investigation for their alleged involvement in the scam. According to a document obtained by the Daily Star, the Anti-Corruption Bureau is now investigating the role of two former Authorised Officers of Rajuk who have been allegedly involved in "forgery and deception."

The Anti-Corruption Bureau is investigating a particular case against the two Authorised Officers who allegedly gave permission to build four multi-storied buildings on public land where legal height limit for building construction was restricted a maximum of 25 feet. Both the former Authorised Officers were transferred to Rajuk's Design and Planning sections where they are still serving.

In other cases, an inquiry committee of the Ministry of Housing and Public Works has already submitted its report after investigation. The authorities are now deciding what punitive measures must be taken against these officials.

"Everybody in Rajuk knows these people were involved in...
See page 11 col 5

Shantu Larma in city to discuss CHT issues

By Special Correspondent

Shantu (Jyotindriyo Bodhipriya) Larma, chairman of the Regional Council for the Chittagong Hill Tracts arrived in the capital yesterday to attend a review meeting on CHT with the prime minister on May 21.

The review meeting aims to sort out the differences between the CHT leader and the government on certain issues, sources said.

The issues include implementation of the CHT Peace Treaty, resettlement of the refugees and internally displaced persons, withdrawal of the security forces, and law and order.

CHT treaty implementation committee convener and chief whip of the Treasury Bench in parliament Abul Hasanat Abdullah, CHT minister Kalparanjay Chakma, CHT Task Force chairman Dipankar Talukder and CHT development board chairman Bir Bahadur also will be in the meeting.

Shantu Larma will inaugurate a convention of a faction of Pahari Chhatra Parishad at Dhaka University at Battala in arts faculty on May 20. This would be his first public appearance in Dhaka since he and his forces turned in their arms on February 10, 1998, ending decades of insurgency.

Buddha Purnima today

Buddha Purnima, the biggest religious festival of Buddhist community, will be celebrated in the country today, reports UNB.

The day marks the birth, attaining enlightenment and passing away of Gautama Buddha, the founder of the non-violent religious community, about 2,500 years ago.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in separate messages on the eve of the day greeted the members of Buddhist community.

Different Buddhist organisations have taken elaborate programmes to celebrate the day in a befitting manner.

Bangladesh Bouddha Krishi Prochar Sangha on Monday began a three-day programme including discussion meeting, rally and 'Pindadan' for the monks.