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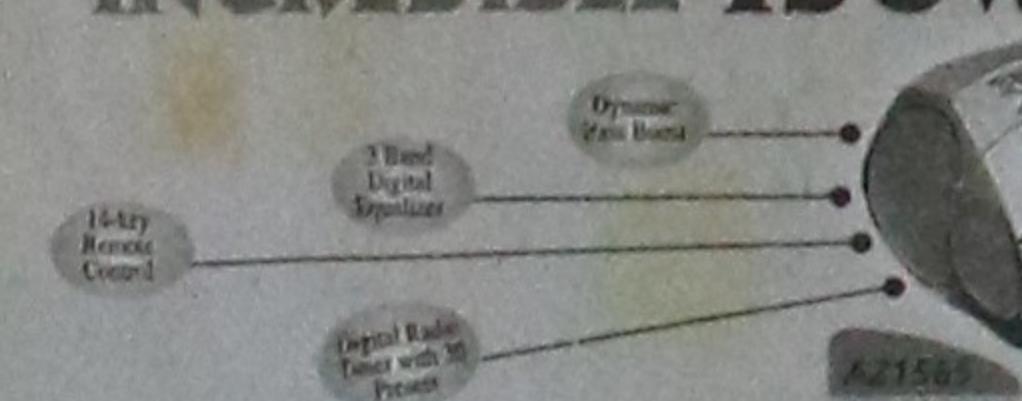
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British ship that sank 57 yrs ago being salvaged

BARISAL, Dec 2: The British passenger ship 'Rudra' which sank about 57 years ago, is being salvaged from the river Kancha near Bhandaria upazila under Pirojpur district by a private team led by one Abdul Hyd Talukder, reports BSS.

According to an official source, the Bagerhat-bound passenger ship 'Rudra' from Pirojpur sank at Jholaghati in the river Kancha about three kilometres off Bhandaria Steamghat with over 200 passengers on board on Bangla month Magh 13, 1350 (1947) due to severe cyclone.

The rescue operation of the ship has been done many times at the government and non-government levels earlier, but with no success. All the passengers including children and women died as the ship capsized.

One Kabir Ahmed, a labour leader of Mongla port, applied. See page 11 col 1

Pintu-Falu-Mosharraf issue**Crisis deepens in BNP**

By Staff Correspondent

Crisis in BNP has further deepened as the party leaders and activists at all levels are divided into two camps over policy decision on vital issues.

The decade old conflict between the hardliners and moderates intensified in recent days as the hardliners comprising 'anti-liberation and undemocratic' elements are desperately trying to establish their supremacy in the party by influencing the party chief.

Party sources said the hardliners have long been misguiding BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and trying to align the party with rightwing fundamentalist parties.

They said a dozen BNP leaders, who made huge assets through corruption when the party was in power, are trying to place their chosen hardliners in key positions in the party and its front organisations.

They said these leaders hold secret meetings at the business offices of two leaders at Sharif Mansion at Motijheel in the city. One of the leaders is from Chittagong and another from Bhola.

The hardliners are backed by some rich but non-political elements who promised huge subscriptions to the party if their men are placed in key positions.

Their main target now is to make Standing Com-

mittee member Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain secretary general of the party and Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu president of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), BNP's student front.

But the move to remove Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan from the post of secretary general was strongly opposed by the moderates who enjoy support of the rank and file in BNP and JCD, reports UNB.

A joint move by the hardliners and two aides of the BNP Chairperson to make Pintu president of JCD was opposed by majority of the leaders and activists of BNP, JCD and other front organisations.

Pintu, a non-student, was made general secretary of JCD in December 1998 at the influence of Khaleda Zia's aide Mosaddeq Ali Falu amid strong resentment in the rank and file of BNP and JCD, the sources said.

With a very poor academic background, Pintu was never a student leader in any educational institution, they claimed.

Pintu, who was known as the right hand of Falu, became very powerful in BNP when the party came to power in 1991. He then devoted himself to making his personal fortune.

Pintu started as a contractor with the Facilities

See page 11 col 2

Opposition's demonstration on Dec 5

The four-party opposition alliance will stage countrywide demonstrations on December 5 protesting price hike of essentials, deterioration of law and order and power-gas-water crises, reports UNB.

As part of the programme, all-party action council of the alliance will hold a rally at Muktangan in the city at 3 pm. The rally will be followed by a procession.

Meanwhile, BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan in a statement last night said the government has failed to check price hike of essentials in the month of Ramadan.

He said people don't want to see this government in power as it failed to run the country and solve the public problems.

The BNP leader asked all units of the party across the country to make the December 5 demonstration a success.

Indian garments worth Tk 6 lakh seized in Ctg: 5 arrested

From Our Correspondent CHITTAGONG, Dec 2: Smuggled Indian garments worth about Tk 6 lakh were recovered in the city yesterday.

Six people including an Indian citizen were arrested for their alleged involvement in the smuggling.

A police team led by the Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Potenga police station recovered the goods from a private car at Cement Crossing in Airport area at around 5.30 pm.

The arrested were identified as Kazi Nazmul Hasan of Howrah, West Bengal, Masud, 28, Shahed Ali, 30, Ashraful Haq, 26, Masud Tareq, 38, and Saiful Islam, 32.

SKOP calls hartal in Narsingdi town Dec 11

NARSINGDI, Dec 2: Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) has called for a dawn-to-dusk hartal in the district town on December 11 to press home their demands, reports UNB.

The programme was announced today at a protest rally in the BSCIC industrial area following the tragic fire incident at Choudhury Knitwear factory that killed about 50 workers.

The demands of the workers include Tk two lakh compensation for each worker died and treatment and compensation for all injured in the fire incident on November 25.

2 Indians held with arms in Satkhira

SATKHIRA, Dec 2: Police arrested two Indian citizens along with a pistol and seven bullets from village Shearapara in Kaliganj upazila on Friday, reports UNB.

The arrested were identified as Ansar Gazi, 30, son of late Bachtulla of Barunhat village in Hasnabad thana and Abdus Salam, son of Nur Ali of village Katakhali in same thana of Uttar Chabibh Pargana.

Kaliganj thana OC Abdur Rashid said patrolling team of police challenged the two men while they were moving at village Shearapara in the evening.

Later police recovered a German made pistol and bullets from them. A case was filed with Kaliganj thana.



Villagers and rescue workers crowd the upturned carriages of an Amritsar-bound train as they lie on top of each other after ramming a goods train near Ambala, some 200 kms north of New Delhi yesterday. Thirty-six people were killed and over 100 injured. (Story on page 5)

- AFP photo

Rival faction rejects Razzak-Tayeb backed faction forms BNP Khulna dist unit

From Quazi Amanullah

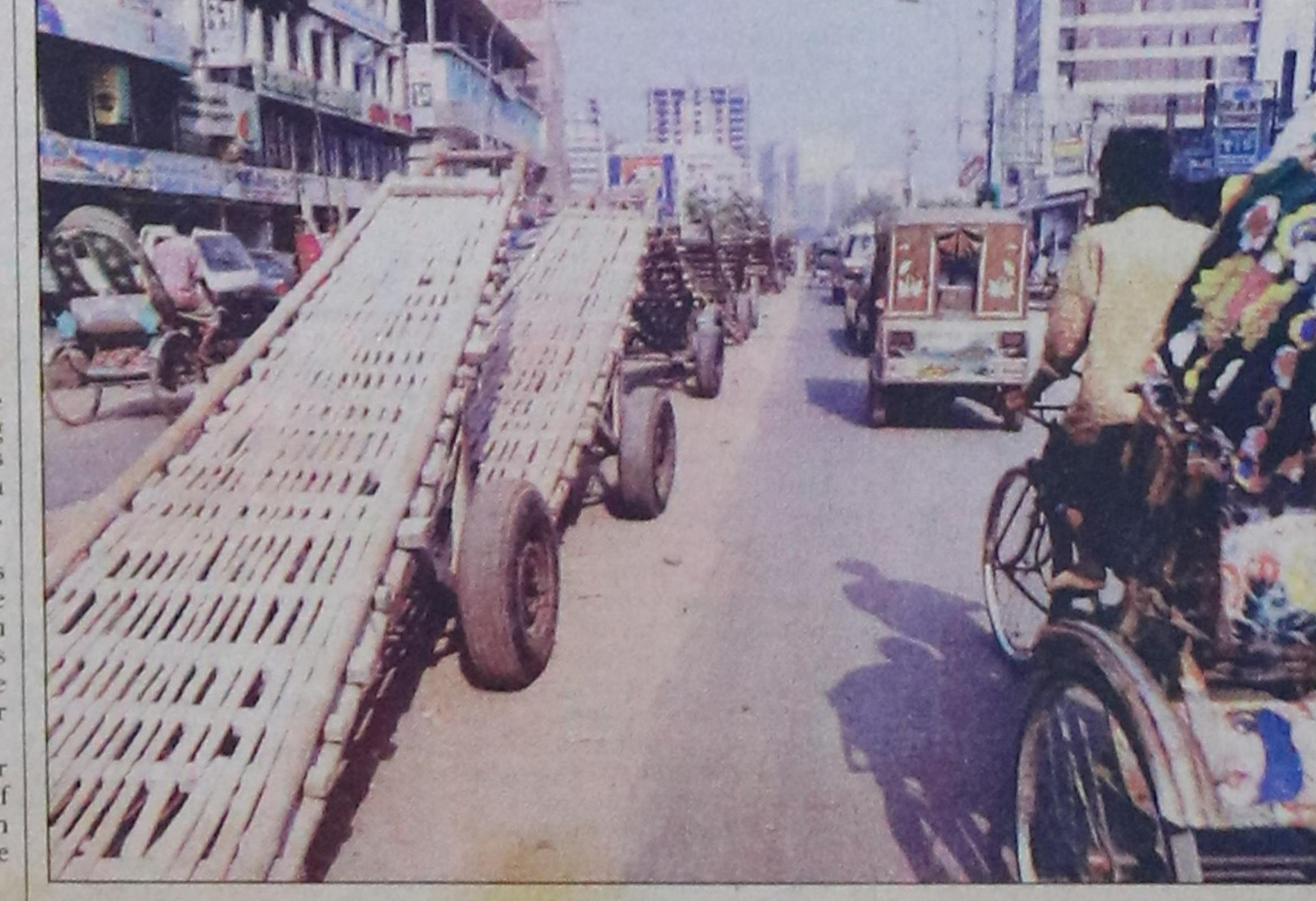
KHULNA, Dec 2: Activists of rival groups of both city and district BNP were seen flexing their muscles in front of two separate offices of the party today. The showdown is the result of the formation of 101-member new district committee on Friday evening with Gazi Abdul Parias president and Shaharuzzaman Mortuza as General Secretary. This committee is strongly being backed by former speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali MP and city Mayor Shaikh Tayebur Rahman.

The Joint Secretary General of BNP's central committee and former whip Ashraf Hossain termed the newly announced district committee as most unacceptable and ultra vires of the party constitution. I was not informed of the convening of the district council on Friday in the city's office despite the fact of my being the convenor of the district committee earlier approved by the chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia last year, said the former whip.

Friday evening's meeting of the Razzak Tayeb group ran into trouble as activists of Ashraf Marju group stormed into the city office of the party. The meeting ended in fiasco. But they again sat in the parlour of City Mayor's Private residence where 101-member district committee was announced.

Khulna City BNP president M Nurul Islam Dadu expressed his sharp reaction against formation of the new district committee and sought intervention of party chairperson Begum Zia to resolve the crisis immediately to avert a clear split.

See page 11 col 1



The one-way Sonargaon Road in the city has become a parking lot for pushcarts, hampering movement of traffic.

FAO DG praises Dhaka's efforts to eradicate poverty

ROME, Dec 2: A top official of the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) today praised Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her efforts to eradicate poverty and malnutrition by building up food security in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

Director General of FAO Jacques Diouf made the observations when he called on Hasina at her hotel suite here this morning.

The Rome-based UN agency, FAO, gave Ceres Award to Sheikh Hasina last year for her contribution to the development in the agriculture sector.

Diouf also lauded the political will of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in undertaking a large number of programmes aimed at alleviating poverty.

Hasina briefed the FAO-DG about the measures taken by her government for eradicating poverty. She particularly mentioned

See page 11 col 7

Shrimps worth Tk 100cr lying at Mongla for want of vessels

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Dec 2: Eighty containers of frozen shrimps worth over Taka 100 crore have been lying in the container yard at Mongla port since last fortnight due to crisis of sea-going vessels. As a result, exporters are being subjected to extra financial involvement for transporting the cargo from Khulna to Chittagong for shipment for maintaining time schedule. If ships are not palced at Mongla Port immediately, then LCs of frozen shrimps worth several crores of taka will stand cancelled for violating terms and conditions, said some exporters of Frozen Foods.

According to a reliable source of Khulna office of BFFEA, there is no possibility of placing the feeder vessels at Mongla Port before middle of the current month for loading the containers of frozen shrimps.

BSC ship 'Banglar Moni' scheduled to arrive at the port by December 12 is not capable to load more than 50 containers, said the source. Buyers will refuse to accept the frozen shrimps if they do not get it well ahead of the Christmas day, the source further said.

Our frequent reminders to authorities concerned for solving the crisis of feeder vessels have so far gone unheeded through shrimp export trade through Mongla Port into uncertainty. Over a million ballots from Palm Beach and Miami-Dade counties, including 13,300 disputed by the Gore camp, were earlier delivered to the Tallahassee court on orders from Sauls.

The vice president suffered a setback on Friday when Florida's Supreme Court rejected his appeal to have the disputed ballots recounted immediately.

Also on Friday, Sauls told Gore lawyers for the



Jacques Diouf, Director General of UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her hotel suite in Rome yesterday.

- PID photo

Court hears arguments in Gore's election challenge

THALASSEE, Florida, Dec 2: A landmark trial that could determine the US presidency was underway today with a judge hearing Al Gore's contest of George W Bush's victory in Florida, reports AFP.

The hearing focused on Gore's request for the manual recount of thousands of disputed Florida ballots, which Bush opposes.

The proceedings at the Leon County Circuit Court, in the Florida capital Tallahassee, started at 9.20 am (1420 GMT) with Gore's top lawyer David Boies outlining his arguments.

"We have alleged that the certified results reject a number of legal votes and include a number of illegal votes," he said.

But Bush's lawyer Barry Richard claimed a recount would be "unreasonable and contrary to Florida law."

Judge Sanders Sauls said he expected the session to last about 12 hours, but it was not immediately clear when he would rule on the recount request.

Bush holds a razor-thin 535-vote lead in the Florida results certified by state officials, but Gore contends that if the contested ballots are manually recounted, the final tally will show him the winner. Over a million ballots from Palm Beach and Miami-Dade counties, including 13,300 disputed by the Gore camp, were earlier delivered to the Tallahassee court on orders from Sauls.

The vice president suffered a setback on Friday when Florida's Supreme Court rejected his appeal to have the disputed ballots recounted immediately.

Also on Friday, Sauls told Gore lawyers for the

third time that he would not order a recount until he hears the arguments on both sides.

The Bush camp vehemently opposes any recount, maintaining that the ballots have already been tallied and rejected twice as non-votes by machines.

But, at the same time, they have asked for and received from the judge an order that some 1.2 million ballots from three other counties be kept locked up and prepared for delivery to Tallahassee.

The Democrats accuse the Bush camp of using delaying tactics that could prevent a possible recount from being completed before a December 12 deadline for Florida's Electoral College slate to be named.

This could play into the hands of the Bush campaign, as Republican legislators have said they could take the unprecedented step of naming the electors if the deadline is not met.

But the Gore camp is quietly pinning its hopes on another two lawsuits in which Democratic activists have asked that 25,000 ballots be thrown out because Republicans allegedly tampered with absentee ballot applications in Seminole and Martin counties.

In both cases, the plaintiffs want all the absentee votes cast out, as it is impossible to link the contested forms with specific ballots.

Both trials, which do not involve Gore lawyers, are to be held in the Florida capital on Wednesday, almost a month after the November 7 presidential election.

See page 11 col 8

200 buried alive as shopping centre collapses in China

BEIJING, Dec 2: Some 200 people were buried alive when a two-storey shopping mall collapsed in China's southern Guangdong province.

Reuters quoting Hong Kong media said, about 100 people were buried when a two-storey shopping mall collapsed in China's southern Guangdong province.

Television footage shown in Hong Kong today showed rescuers removing bodies from the disaster site as other workers clambered over mounds of fallen wooden scaffolding and debris to search for signs of life underneath.

There were no indications, nor confirmation, of the death toll.

Two groups of terrorists clash at N'ganj: 20 hurt

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Dec 2: At least

20 people were injured, eight of them by bullets in a gunfight between two groups of terrorists in Fatullah rail station area in early hours today.

Police and local people said two groups of terrorists clashed over control of a fishers farm at 2 am.

Both the groups exchanged several rounds of shots during the clash that continued for an hour.

Rejoinder

By Staff Correspondent

Abu A. Abdullah, Director General of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), has rejected the claim made by the Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) that the sub-implementing agencies including BIDS were involved in financial irregularities in the Sustainable Environment Management (SEM) Project.

In a rejoinder to a news item headlined 'UNDP threatens to withdraw major share of SEM funds' published in The Daily Star on November 29, the BIDS DG said the two components Sustainable Development Networking Project and Policy Studies - under SEM are being implemented by BIDS in a transparent manner. A government audit for the period between October 1998 and June 2000

See page 11 col 8