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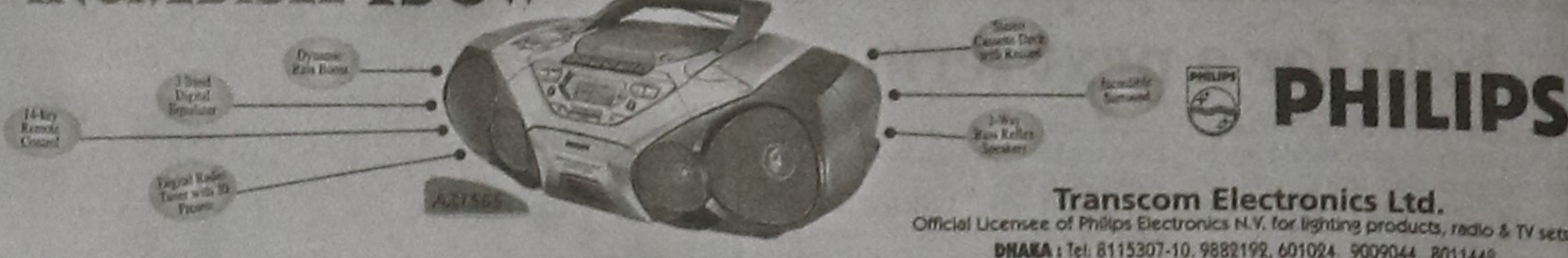
The World On Time

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Swedish help in power sector assured

Swedish government has assured help to improve power distribution system in Bangladesh, reports BSS.

The assurance came when Swedish Ambassador to Bangladesh Anders Johnson met Chairman of Bangladesh Power Development Board Brigadier General M A Malek at WAPDA Bhaban.

During the meeting, Johnson informed that a high-powered Swedish delegation would soon visit Bangladesh to undertake a feasibility study for its infrastructural development.

The Swedish delegation will lay special emphasis on the cooperation in power distribution system to improve the country's economy.

The Chairman of PDB also sought Swedish cooperation in power generation through solar power to provide electricity in offshore islands and far-flung areas in the hill tracts.

Sweden has so far been cooperating with Bangladesh in its social sector. Now Sweden has extended its cooperation in economic and power sectors.

BB to issue polymer notes of Tk 10 Dec 14

Bangladesh Bank (BB) will issue polymer bank notes of Taka 10 denomination in new designs on December 14 from its banking counter here, reports BSS.

Polymer bank note is being launched on an experimental basis in place of paper notes as per a decision taken by the Bangladesh Bank. The new notes will be available in other offices of the bank later, a BB press release said here yesterday.

The polymer note contains the picture of the national mosque and a portrait of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on the front while the picture of the Jatiya Sangsad and the National Memorial on the back.

3 arrested with arms from a city hotel

Police arrested three persons and seized one foreign-made revolver with five bullets from a city hotel Wednesday night, a DMP press release said, reports BSS.

A squad of Detective Branch of Police, acting on a tip-off, arrested the three from Room No 104 of SAARC International Hotel at Maghbazar under Ramna thana and seized the revolver and bullets from their possession.

The arrested are Mohammad Ishak, Monirul Islam alias Chanchal and Sirajuddin, the press release added.

Punishment of errant Pak Deputy HC demanded

By Staff Correspondent
Ekatturer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul and Jatiya Samannaya Committee has demanded of the government to declare Pakistan an 'enemy state' for the failure of its Deputy High Commissioner Irfan Raja for his derogatory and audacious remarks on Bangladesh's War of Independence.

Leaders of the Nirmul Committee also said there is no need of a Pakistani high commission in Dhaka as the country has, in the real sense, failed to accept Bangladesh's independence.

Addressing a rally yesterday at Gulshan Circle 2 before marching towards the Pakistani High Commission to lay a siege, they said mere recall of Irfan Raja is not enough. He must apologise unconditionally and be punished for his audacious remarks.

Pakistani authorities, in the face of stormy protests by the people of Bangladesh and diplo See page 11 col 1

Environment courts still in a limbo

By Shehab Ahmed

Despite enactment of laws, it is still uncertain when environment courts will start functioning because of bureaucratic red tapism in ministries concerned and lack of persuasion by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF).

The Jatiya Sangsad in April this year enacted new laws for setting up of the environment courts in the five divisional headquarters to prosecute polluters.

The MOEF then send copies of the laws to the Law, Finance and Establishment ministries for necessary action for creation of facilities, allocation of funds and recruitment of manpower.

The Finance Ministry as usual declined to allocate funds, saying the request was made at the end of the budgetary exercise.

The Law and the Establishment ministries had also their arguments to defer recruitment of manpower and creation of facilities for the five courts.

As a result, the polluters are basking in the glory of their crimes, polluting the environment further.

Lack of prosecution has left with impunity more than 1100 industries in textile, garments, dyeing, power, chemical and fertilizer sectors, which were identified by the Department of Environment (DOE) as worst polluters.

Even owners of brick fields and polluting vehicles and factories in residential areas can not be prosecuted by the DOE.

The encroachers of six rivers including the Buriganga, Shitalakhya and Karnafuli are

also skirting the law.
The DOE has identified hundreds of establishments and people who have occupied the river beds and wetlands, threatening the ecosystem.

A case in point is the dying Buriganga which has become highly polluted and devoid of any aquatic life. The DOE in 1998 identified 246 factories, establishments and illegally raised houses which encroached upon the river bed, leading to its slow death.

Same is the case with the Shitalakhya, Turag, Dhaleshwari. Besides encroachment, hundreds of factories are releasing pollutants into those, violating laws.

Despite issuance of final notices, the encroachers and owners of the factories are See page 11 col 8



Protesters run away from tear gas fired by riot police on the streets of Nice yesterday. Twenty policemen were injured in violent protests near the Nice conference centre where European leaders were assembling as anti-globalisation campaigners and Basque nationalists confronted police in a series of street-battles. -- AFP photo

Mongla dockers resume work State ministers' intervention ends stand-off

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Dec 7: Dock workers resumed their duties at Mongla port this morning following an assurance given by three state ministers for meeting their demand for booking of extra casual workers in clinker and other imported cargo-carrying ships.

The three state ministers are Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Talukder Abdul Khaleque and Dr Mozammel Hossain.

According to a Mongla port authority source and OC of Mongla thana, 83 gangs were booked in 13 sea-going ships from morning shift.

Two committees have been formed to probe the incident at Mongla on Tuesday that led to the killing of four people in police firing.

Members of the committee headed by the Additional DIG started work from today, collecting information from eye-witnesses of the incident. The other committee is yet to begin its work.

The committees have been asked to submit their

reports by Monday.

Tk 10,000 was given to each of the family of four killed in the police firing.

"This is a token donation I am giving you in addition to my commitment to resolve the dispute and employ any eligible person of your families in any of the department of the government including port and police service," said the state minister for shipping after offering fataha at the graves of the deceased.

BDR and riot police are still patrolling the port and Mongla town area.

The chairman of Mongla port authority could not be contacted despite several attempts for his comment about the latest situation.

Some highly placed sources said that cement importers are planning to move clinker-laden ships to Chittagong port, fearing further labour unrest.

Govt urged to ratify UN convention on migrants

December 18 to be declared International Migrants Day soon

By Reaz Ahmad

With the United Nations set to declare December 18 as the International Migrants Day, Bangladeshi migrant workers have become increasingly vocal about their demands that the government ratify the UN convention on migrants.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM), a UN affiliate, confirmed in Dhaka yesterday that December 18 would soon be declared the migrants day. The decision would cap a three-year campaign launched by various national and inter-

national human rights, migrant rights and civil rights organisations.

Migrant workers contribute immensely to Bangladesh's burgeoning economy. Every year some three million Bangladeshi migrants send home, on an average, 1.5 billion US dollars in remittance.

In recent times, the foreign wage earners have expressed grave concern at rampant violation of migrants' rights, complaining that employment See page 11 col 1

Khaleda to address PHA today

Opposition leader Khaleda Zia will address the concluding session of People's Health Assembly (PHA) at Nayarhat, Savar today, reports UNB.

Over 3,000 delegates from 95 countries are attending the PHA aiming at raising voice against industrialisation of health sector.

Rooms of Shibir men ransacked at Barisal Medical College hostel

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Dec 7: Activists of pro-Awami League Chhatra League allegedly ransacked nine rooms of Chhatra Shibir supporters at Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College at midnight last night.

Witnesses said the BCL activists attacked the rooms at Habibur Rahman hostel and damaged furniture and other goods, sources said.

Shibir activists alleged that they came under attack as the BCL activists were not invited to an 'iftar party'.

However, Abu Zafar, a BCL leader and cultural secretary of the college students union, alleged that the Shibir activists refused to return the bedding of some students of the college who were earlier Shibir supporters.

Mongla port incident SKOP demands trial of policemen responsible for killing 4 workers

By Staff Correspondent

Sramik Karmachari Olkya Parishad (SKOP) has demanded trial of the policemen responsible for killing four workers at Mongla port on Tuesday.

The SKOP leaders were addressing a rally at Muktangan organised to protest the incident at Mongla.

The SKOP leaders demanded exemplary punishment to the policemen responsible.

Abdus Salam Khan, Shah Mohammad Nurul Islam, Shariat Ullah, Mahbubur Rahman Ismail, Noor Hossain and Humayun Kabir addressed the rally.

Opium, heroin worth Tk 27 lakh seized in Ctg

From Our Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 7: Kotwali police arrested one person and seized opium and heroin worth Tk 27 lakh from a shop at Boxhirhat See page 11 col 5

Once there was a river Ichhamati now a narrow stream

By Morshed Ali Khan

Silted and left to the mercy of nature, the river Ichhamati is now no more than a narrow stream near Agla village under Nawabganj thana where famous poet Kaokobad once lived.

A Water Development Board (WDB) engineer in Rajshahi said that existence of Ichhamati at different parts of the country made him believe that the name was given to unnamed rivers or canals whenever Isha Kha travelled through them.

Ichhamati at Agla originates from the mighty Padma in Manikganj winding its way through Harirampur, Nawabganj and Srinagar in Mughiganj before joining the Padma again in the southeast.

But during the dry period, most of the 50-kilometer stretch of the Ichhamati is a sorry sight. At places it is already known as the dead Ichhamati. With its sandy bed exposed to the sun, children from the villages along its banks make merry playing cricket, football, kabaddi and danguli. Farmers dry their harvest for threshing. Villagers

repair their boats in preparation for the rainy season. At places, where the water gets trapped, village women do washing and fishermen set up traps to catch fish.

A WDB engineer in Dhaka Division-1 said that the Ichhamati received a booster during the 1998 flooding. AKM Habibullah, executive engineer of the WDB, said with massive deposition of silt during rainy season it is almost impossible to keep these useful canals or rivers flowing all year round.

"During rainy season the major rivers carry so much silt that many rivers and canals along their way get highly silted. With our existing resources it is almost impossible to dredge all these channels and keep them operational," said Habibullah.

Like Ichhamati, hundreds of historic rivers and canals in the country simply face extinction. One day these waterways may only exist in the memory of elderly people who lived along them and have tales to tell our future generations.



Sorry tale of a dying river
A rural woman collects water from what was once the spontaneous river Ichhamati. Siltation has turned the river into a narrow stream. -- Star photo by Amran Hossain

JS body stresses precautions to combat calamities

By Staff Correspondent

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Relief and Disaster Management at a meeting yesterday underscored the need for precautionary measures to combat natural calamities.

Presided over by Chairman of the Committee Syed Kamal Bakht, the meeting viewed that the recent flood in the country's south-western region caused serious damages due to lack of information about it.

The meeting reviewed the post flood rehabilitation programme and relief operation by the government and various social organisations and expressed satisfaction.

"We have reputation worldwide in combating

natural calamities but the recent flood was a sudden and unusual one. Despite limitations, the government handled the post flood rehabilitation programme efficiently," said a ruling party lawmaker who attended the meeting.

The flood caused loss of life and property in 16 districts including nine in the south-western region. As soon as water receded from the flood-hit areas, the government started the rehabilitation programme, the meeting was informed.

Under the programme, Tk five crore was given for house building. Distribution of 13,116 tonnes of foodgrains under the VGF card programmes is See page 11 col 6

DU convocation on Jan 27

By DU Correspondent

The 41st convocation of Dhaka University will be held on January 27 next.

This will be the second convocation of DU after the independence. According to a press release of DU those eligible for attending the convocation are: Students who obtained Master's degree in 1997, Honours degree in 1998, MBBS and BDS in 1999 and 2000, BSc in Textile Engineering in 1998, BSc in Nursing in 1999, BSc (Pass) in Home Economics in 1998, BBA in 1999 and 2000, MBA in 1999 and 2000, M.Ed. In 1999, degrees form the Post Graduate Medical Science and Research Institute in 1999 and 2000, M.Phil. obtained from July 1998 to December 1999, Ph.D obtained from December 1999 to December 2000 and those awarded Gold Medal after the last convocation held in December 1999.

Intending participants have been asked to collect convocation forms from the office of DU controller of examinations from December 10 and submit those with three copies of passport size photos by January 15 after depositing registration fees with Janata Bank, TSC branch or Agrani Bank, Curzon Hall branch.

Registration fees for degree holders form the Post Graduate Medical Science and Research Institute as well as M.Phil and Ph.D holders have been fixed at Tk 750 each and that for others is Tk 500 each.

No payment of fees would be accepted after January 15. Money Order, Postal Order, Pay Order and Bank Draft for this would not also be accepted.

Separatist guerillas kill 22 in Assam

GUWAHATI, Dec 7: Separatist guerillas today killed at least 22 people in the oil-rich Indian state of Assam, police here said, reports AFP. The attack occurred in the remote town of Sadiya, some 600 kilometers (370 miles) east of the state capital of Guwahati, a police spokesman said.

He said the victims were mostly non-Assamese people, and accused the region's dominant United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) separatist organisation for the killings in the tiny township in the forested state bordering Bangladesh and Bhutan.

Today's killings came a week after unidentified guerillas went on a shooting spree, killing 14 people and wounding 12 in three separate attacks in Assam's Bongaigaon district, 210 kilometres (130 miles) west of Guwahati.

The massacre sparked off an intensified crackdown by Indian forces in the timber- and oil-rich state.

Today's killing raised to 100 the number of non-Assam inhabitants murdered in separate massacres since October by homeland-seekers in the restive state.

The bloodiest raid was on October 21 when 15 traders and farmers were killed in Tinsukia district.

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