

The Daily Star

on Friday

Your 20-page
weekend
paper

Wishing the
BEST
for the
3rd Millennium

INSIDE TODAY

COMMENT

Page 6
Everything about these commemorative programmes is in order except that they don't tell the whole story. Majority of our martyrs who came from the villages remain unstung and unknown. There is a tale of missing millions, missing from the collective memory that suffers from selective amnesia, writes **Hasnat Abdul Hye** in *Our Martyrs*.
Mohammad Badrul Ahsan writes on US presidential election in *Who Elected George W. Bush?*

SOUTHASIA

Page 4
Mansoor Mamoon's Civil Military Oligarchy vs. the Masses
Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury's Hope in Hopelessness
Ekram Kabir's The Hotbed of Tension?
Harun ur Rashid's The Window of Opportunity

ENVIRONMENT

Page 8
Ainun Nishat and Mahfuz Ullah write on the potential ill consequences of a proposed plan to raise the water level in the Kaptai Lake to generate more electricity in *Dammed or damned?*
Md. Asadullah Khan underscores the need for creating awareness about dioxin in *In dark about a dread called dioxin*

VOL. X NO. 332 REGD. NO. DA 781

www.dailystarnews.com

DHAKA FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2000

PQUSH 8, 1407 BS

RAMADAN 25, 1421 HIJRI

20 PAGES PLUS MAGAZINE PRICE: TAKA 9.00

Eid 'holiday' begins

By Staff Correspondent

The lengthy eight-day government holidays begin today, thanks to the close proximity of Eid-ul-Fitr holidays with some other consecutive public holidays and weekends. Government servants will enjoy the longest ever holiday this year, although an intervening working day on December 26 breaks the continuity of the recess down the middle.

Today, December 22, a regular weekly holiday, is also Jumaat-ul-Wida or the last Friday of holy Ramadan followed by Saturday, December 23, which is another regular weekly holiday. The next two holidays are on December 24 and 25 due to Shab-e-Qadr and Christmas respectively.

The 'odd working day' on December 26 will be followed by three Eid holidays on December 27, 28 and 29 while December 30 is a Saturday, once again a regular weekly holiday.

Millions of city-dwellers have been looking forward to enjoying the Eid with their near and dear ones at their village homes. See page 11 col 3



The ritual begins! It's all too a familiar sight at Sadarghat terminal, with homebound people catching their launches for the ensuing Eid festival. --Star photo

US\$650m gap between Bangladesh Bank, EPB export figures

Central bank sets deadline on receipt realisation

Star Report

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) will take action against exporters and banks concerned if export receipts are not realised in four months of shipment.

The decision was taken at a meeting of top bankers and other government officials yesterday with BB Governor Dr Mohammad Farashuddin in the chair.

The meeting also decided to strengthen monitoring of export receipts by the central bank.

Held at the BB, the meeting was attended by managing directors of different commercial banks and high officials of the commerce ministry, Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) and the central bank.

On the back of an unstable foreign exchange reserve and non-realisation of export receipts, the BB Governor convened the meeting to discuss ways and means to end the trend.

The meeting found a gap of 650 million US dollars between export figures of BB and EPB.

Usually, EPB prepares the export figure on the basis of shipment and BB prepares it on the basis of receipt of export bill. As the gap reached as high as 3 per cent, the meeting thought that there might have been export receipts, lying unrealised abroad.

The usual gap between the figures of BB and EPB was one per cent, sources said.

The bankers at the meeting held the readymade garment (RMG), leather and frozen food sectors responsible for the unrealised export receipts. It was also discussed that the export figure of KAFCO was not reflected in the annual export figure.

The bankers also discussed the over-invoicing of imports by some unscrupulous people to siphon off foreign currency and also decided to put a ban on the foreign currency kurb market.

The BB also asked the commercial banks to prepare their export statement in a new format.

Eight held on suspicion of unlawful trade in polymer note

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Bank (BB) security men yesterday caught eight people from its premises suspecting their involvement in illegal trading in new 10 taka polymer notes and handed them over to police.

Bundles of polymer notes were recovered from their possession sources said.

The law enforcers took them to the police barrack on the BB premises, witnesses said. But it could not be known whether any case was lodged in this connection. When contacted, the duty officer at Motijheel thana could not say anything about the incident.

The BB authorities have tightened security and restricted issuance of not more than 10 polymer notes to a person following allegations that some people were selling those at premium rates in connivance with some BB staff.

The BB authorities on Wednesday suspended two of its staff for their alleged involvement in illegal trading in polymer notes and also ordered an inquiry to find who else are involved in the unlawful practice.

Meanwhile, the BB has suspended issuance of polymer notes from December 26. Polymer notes will be issued again from next month when the next consignment will reach the country.

According to BB sources, some five crore polymer notes have been printed in Australia. Only 4,800,000 notes have been brought to the country in the first consignment.

Marauding mosquitoes raise dengue fear

Stagnant surface drains prove DCC drive hollow

By Raziur Rahman

As the dry season sets in, there has been a marked rise in mosquito population in the city, raising fears amongst residents of yet another onslaught of dengue fever.

There has been hardly any rain in the past few weeks and with water stagnant in the surface drains, the condition, experts say, is ideal for mosquitoes to breed. Moreover, there are about 2,000 swamps in and around the city.

People living in the city complain that failure of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) to keep the surface drains clean has allowed unhindered reproduction of mosquitoes. During its two-week life span, a mosquito

engages in reproduction 12 times, each time producing 150 larvae.

The sharp rise in the mosquito population in and around the city has naturally given rise to fear of a dengue outbreak. Since mid-July this year, the deadly disease has claimed 98 lives in the capital city alone, according to official estimate. However, unofficial counts put the toll at around 200.

Initially, the government had said, the potentially life-threatening disease might linger till November. Later, it revised its projection in the face of steadily pouring in reports of dengue infection and said the viral infection could continue until the end of January next year.

City-dwellers feel the DCC should immediately identify the breeding sites and take measures to kill the larvae.

Professor Mahmud-ul-Amin of Dhaka University's Zoology Department, who has worked on mosquito control for more than three decades, believes that nearly 30 per cent of the problem could be resolved by simply cleaning the surface drains and ensuring smooth flow of water.

Every ward commissioner gets an annual DCC grant of Tk 50 lakh for development work, conservancy and cleaning of surface drains. Moreover, each ward commissioner has in his charge 35 sweepers on DCC payroll. Still, most of the surface drains have

Truant minister irks parliamentary body

Rob skips ninth meeting on a trot

By Staff Correspondent

Members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock once again expressed their resentment at its meeting yesterday over the continued abstention of the minister concerned from its meetings.

Fisheries and Livestock Minister A S M Rob, continued to remain absent from nine consecutive meetings of the JS body, including yesterday's meeting. This angered its members as most of its suggestions were ignored by the ministry.

Presided over by Committee Chairman A S M Feroz, the meeting focused on timely implementation of various projects including the Fourth Fisheries Project, meeting sources said.

After remaining absent from eight meetings, Rob informally told Feroz at a function on Wednesday that he would not be able to attend Thursday's meeting as his son was sick, the sources said.

The meeting observed that other members would lose interest in attending meetings as most of the suggestions of the JS body were not implemented due to 'non cooperation' of the minister, the sources said.

In its last meeting in the early December, the Committee decided to meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and bring the matter to her notice.

The Committee Chairman who is a ruling party lawmaker told newsmen that the Prime Minister, seeing newspaper reports, called the minister and asked him to attend the JS body meetings.

See page 11 col 3

Individual limit for gold import halved

Govt reacts to rising smuggling

By M Shamsur Rahman

In the wake of a marked rise in gold smuggling, the government has decided to revert to an earlier decision by slashing import limit by half.

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) issued a new statutory order (SRO) yesterday, which

allows a person to import only five kilograms of gold on payment of a duty of Tk 300 per tola or 11.66 gram. The same limit was imposed in the 1999-2000 fiscal.

In the last budget, the government liberalised its policy to allow

See page 11 col 1

No sooner had he...

By Nazmul Ashraf

For Narayan Chandra Chando, who won Wednesday's parliamentary by-election in Khulna-5 constituency, it is likely to be only a few months' affair, as the tenure of the present Jatiya Sangsad is nearing its end.

Chando's tenure is supposed to be of six months if the present parliament completes its full term. But, it is highly likely that the parliament will be dissolved early next year, with both the government and the opposition readying for next general election.

The stint of two more MPs, to be elected in the forthcoming by-elections at Pabna-5 and Satkhira-1 constituencies, will be even shorter. These two prospective lawmakers may lose their membership before being accustomed to parliamentary practices.

The schedule of by-elections to the two vacant seats are yet to be announced.

See page 11 col 1



Queen's ransom

The smell of the hunt, the pleasure of the verbal conflict over these three gorgeous saris, Tk 1 lakh apiece, truly manifested the aesthetics of bargaining during Eid shopping at a shop at Gulshan in the city yesterday. --Star photo

College student murdered at Feni

From Our Correspondent

FENI, Dec 21: Terrorists strangled a college student and looted two shops at Mohipal in the town last night.

The victim Abul Hasnat Supal, 18, second year student of Feni Commerce College, was found dead at a fertiliser shop this morning.

Supal, son of Abul Bashier of village Sadeppur in Daganbhuiyan upazila used to sleep at his paternal uncle's fertiliser shop, Shahana Enterprise.

Police and local people said, a gang of terrorists entered the shop by breaking open the door and strangled Supal. They took away money in cash from the shop.

The terrorists also entered the adjacent jewellery shop. They broke open the iron safe and looted Tk 50,000 and 10 tolas of gold from the shop.

Police recovered Supal's body at 8 am today and sent it to hospital for autopsy.

Mysterious boxes: One more held in Chittagong

CHITTAGONG, Dec 21: Police today arrested another person in connection with 'dropping of the mysterious' boxes in the Bay of Bengal, reports UNB.

Zakir Hossain was picked up from a hotel in Firingi Bazar area of the port city following some important information divulged by Pakistani national Mohammed.

Meanwhile, court today placed seven more of the arrested on remand.

Earlier, seven people were taken on remand for joint interrogation by NSI, DGFI and DB police.

Some 'mysterious' boxes were dropped in the Bay of Bengal from two engine boats after they were challenged by Navy patrols earlier this week.

DMP, armed forces yet to undo traffic tangle

By Staff Correspondent

Despite concerted efforts by Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), Army, Navy, BAF and BDR personnel, traffic jam in the city remains a nagging problem.

DMP had taken some measures at the beginning of Ramadan to ease traffic movement during the month but the situation continued to worsen with the Eid nearing.

To improve the situation, Army, Navy, BAF and BDR personnel were deployed at different points in the city on Sunday in aid of DMP.

Army personnel were first deployed at eight major crossings including Mohakhali, Moghbazar, Mouchak, Farmgate, Sonargaon, Kakrail and Gulistan. BAF men were deployed

at different points on the road from Mohakhali rail crossing to Bijoy Sarani.

Navy personnel are controlling movement of vehicles from Kakrail point to Bijoy Sarani while BDR men were trying to ease traffic jam on the road from New Market to Manik Mia Avenue and at Shahbagh point.

Army personnel were also deployed at the city's inter-district bus terminals on Wednesday.

Pavements in the city have been virtually occupied by vendors, forcing pedestrians to use the roads and this has added to the traffic chaos.

Police sources said a large number of people from outside are now coming to the city every

day for Eid shopping and this is another reason for traffic jam.

Many of the fasting people (rozadars) including office goers carry their 'ifter items' with them or buy those from roadside shops as they cannot return home timely due to traffic jam.

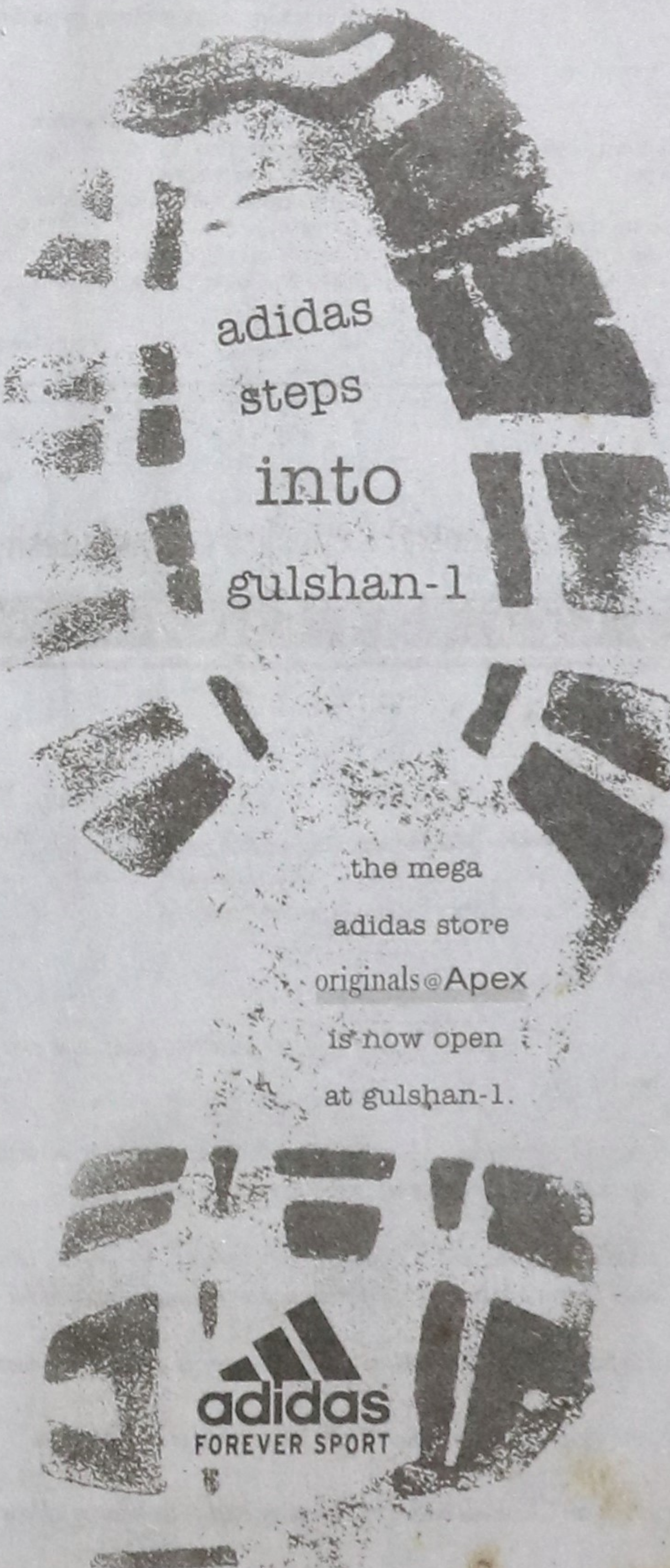
The situation in the old part of the city is much worse because of narrow roads and lanes.

While visiting different areas of the city yesterday, this correspondent found that the traffic situation was still to improve.

Besides the commercial areas, busy markets and Old Dhaka, some posh areas were also experiencing traffic chaos.

Long queues of vehicles were seen from Gulshan-1 crossing to Mohakhali

See page 11 col 3



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Prayer Timings	
December 22	
	Azan Jamaat
Fajr	5-12 5-19
Juma	12-15 1-20
Asr	3-45 4-00
Maghrib	5-14 5-22
Esha	7-00 7-30

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Sehri, Iftar timings	
Ramadan	Dec Sehri Iftar
25	22 5-20
26	23 5-20
27	24 5-13 5-21