

No misappropriation of SEMP funds: UNDP Mission

Emergency direct fund release suggested

BSS, Dhaka

The high-powered independent UNDP Evaluation Mission in yesterday said that the UNDP audit teams did not find any irregularities or cases of misappropriations of SEMP fund so far disbursed and that all its sub-implementing agencies (SIAs) maintain good records of their accounts.

In a report it also said that it did not find any logic as to why this very important programme was suspended and recommended its resumption without any further damage to the cause of sustainable development.

The Mission described the 26 million dollar Sustainable Environment Management programme (SEMP) as the most unique and best green collaborative intervention in Asia and recommended emergency direct release of fund to all sub-implementing agencies (SIAs) for this highly successful programme.

The Mission led by Farling Dessau, who was UNDP Resident Representative both in Bangladesh and India and was in-charge of the reconstruction of Somalia, commended the achievements of 21 SIAs of SEMP in first two years and expressed concerns that those achievements and gains could be lost if all activities of this innovative programme not resumed immedi-

ately.

Dessau said this during a meeting at Economic Relations Division (ERD) with ERD Secretary Dr AKM Mashiur Rahman in the chair. UNDP Resident Representative Jorgen Lissner, ADAB Chairperson Khushi Kabir, FEJB Chairperson Qumrul Islam Chowdhury, IUCN Country Representative Dr Ainun Nishat, Summunoy Chairman Dr Ataur Rahman, BIDS Director Dr M Asaduzzaman, PRISM Chairman Ikramullah and representatives of Planning Commission, World Bank, IMED, DLRS, DPHE, LGED, BELA, CAMPE, Caritas, BUP, Waste Concern, EGIS, Gano Chetona made their substantive comments on the Mission report.

The Mission, after its rigorous investigation, field visits and interviews of the beneficiary groups, said the achievements of the five-year SEMP will be a major success story for Bangladesh which can be presented at the United Nations Rio+10 Conference scheduled to be held in South Africa in 2003.

The report also recommended removal of all stumbling blocks for smooth execution of this very vital programme to help arrest environmental degradation in Bangladesh by involving all stakeholder groups including the government ministries and civil society bodies in a collaborative way.

The Mission also suggested

several measures for improvement of the implementation of SEMP in the remaining three years.

The UNDP Resident Representative said he felt sorry for the traumatic experience and hardship that was inflicted on the SIAs for last seven months of stalemate period and that he could not make any direct payment of the SIAs before Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Azha.

Lissner called upon the ERD Secretary to help resume the activities of SEMP on an emergency basis and put his government's signature to pay directly to all SIAs for expediting the execution of SEMP.

The ERD Secretary also appreciated SEMP activities and said there are avenues of further improvements and the government is committed to resume all activities of this programme supported by UNDP.

Dr Mashiur assured all of its immediate resumption and fund disbursement.

The representatives of SIAs blamed the NPD for unilateral suspension of this major environmental programme by violating the clauses of the letter of agreements signed between the government and SIAs.

They also asked the government and UNDP to safeguard against any dictatorial, unilateral and whimsical decision again regarding the implementation of this commendable environmental programme.



Committee for the Protection of the Rights of the Deaf and Dumb of Bangladesh formed a human chain in front of the National Press Club yesterday prior to submitting a memorandum to visiting UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

Kofi Annan in city

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the troops of Bangladesh now working in Sierra Leone. A new battalion would be added soon.

Bangladesh will shortly become the largest UN peacekeeper when some 2,500 soldiers from its Army join peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone within this month. Currently it has 3,409 peacekeepers abroad, only next to Poland.

Responding to a question, Annan appreciated Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's peace mission in South Asia following the nuclear explosions by Pakistan and India in May, 1998. "I value the role she (Hasina) played."

The UN Secretary General arrived by a special aircraft from Kathmandu on the third leg of his four-nation South Asia tour. He was accompanied by his wife Nane Annan and some senior officials of the world body whose membership now stands at 188.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad received the distinguished guest at the airport. Forest and Environment Minister Sajeda Chowdhury was also present.

Besides, Foreign Secretary Syed Muazzem Ali, Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to UN Anwarul Karim Chowdhury and UNDP Resident Representative Jorgen Lissner were present.

Samad Azad said Annan's visit is "a recognition of Bangladesh's growing international profile".

Annan and Samad Azad will hold official talks today. He will then deliver a lecture on "Sustainable Development: Humanity's biggest challenge in the new Century" at the International Conference Centre, organised by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS).

His itinerary includes a courtesy call on President Shahabuddin Ahmed and a meeting with Prime

Minister Sheikh Hasina. Annan will place wreath at the National Memorial at Savar, lay foundation stone of the International Mother Language Institute at Segunbagicha in the city and visit Choto Kalampur Ashrayan project.

He will also go to Rajendrapur Peacekeeping Training Centre of Bangladesh Army and witness a training demonstration.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will host a dinner in honour of Mr and Mrs Annan at the Ganabhaban.

Annan who began his term on January 1, 1997, hails from the African country of Ghana, formerly known as Gold Coast. He is the seventh UN Secretary General and the first to be elected from the ranks of the world body. He joined the UN system in 1962 as an administrative and budget officer of the World Health Organisation (WHO) in Geneva.

The Secretary General will address a press conference prior to his departure for Delhi tomorrow morning.

Senior minister of Nepal quits over TV channel

AP, Kathmandu

A senior minister and close aide of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala resigned from the government Tuesday, protesting the Cabinet's plans to establish private television channels.

In his letter of resignation, Minister for Agriculture Jayaprakash Gupta said it would be immoral for him to remain in the Cabinet after the decision.

As minister of communication before receiving the agriculture post, Gupta had blocked proposals for private TV. His successor, Shivraj Joshi, reversed the decision and the rest of the government agreed.

Bahaddarhat

FROM PAGE 12
Alahar Ali to review the chargesheet and report to him.

CMM Mohammad Abdul Malak in his order yesterday acquitted 34 accused including 16 named in FIR and 18 outside the FIR of the charge on the basis of the report of the magistrate Atahar Ali.

Hearing of the case will resume on March 17.

Ershad Sikder's brother arrested in Barisal

BSS, Barisal

Police have recently arrested one of the brothers of Ershad Sikder, from Talatala Bazar under Nalchhiity Upazila.

Noashd Sikder, an accomplice of his brother in various crimes took shelter in his village home at Madaraghona of Nalchhiity Upazila following the arrest of Ershad Sikder in Khulna. He was sent to jail.

Don't misinterpret

FROM PAGE 1
by mid-April so that the caretaker government can hold elections before the rainy season sets in, the AL leaders indicated. Monsoon this year is expected to begin in mid-June.

Hasina is scheduled to address two public functions in the city on March 30 and 31. Speculations are rife that she would spell out her resignation plans at these meetings.

In context of ongoing development towards an early elections, the AL leadership expects that the opposition would not misread the government's good intention and thwart its "good move" by giving an ultimatum from the March 21 rally in the city.

The leaders were also critical of BNP's claim that the government has not realised any of its suggestions to ensure free and fair elections over the years. While unveiling its plans to submit a seven-point

demand to the next caretaker government, the principal opposition party made the claim.

BNP's charter of demands includes among others cancellation of licences for weapons given to terrorists and 'branded' cadres by the AL government and release of all political leaders in jail, and police custody.

The AL leaders claimed that the government had conducted combing operations to recover illegal arms, particularly from the country's south-western region. On the question of release of political leaders from jail, they said "whether elected or caretaker, a government cannot release people from jail who are implicated in specific cases."

The leaders hoped that all parties would participate in the ongoing exchange-of-views programme undertaken by the Election Commission to make their inputs towards electoral reforms.

Govt ready for polls

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Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, for her contribution to women's development.

The complex that includes a training centre and a working women's hostel has been built at a cost of Tk 9.5 crore. The Prime Minister had laid its foundation stone on November 30, 1998.

State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Prof Zinatunnesa Talukder, Chairman of Jatiya Mohila Sangstha Iy Rahman, Women and Children Affairs Secretary AKM Ehsanul Huq and member of the Sangstha Baby Maodud also addressed the function.

About the allegation of the opposition leader that the country would be destroyed under Awami League rule, Prime Minister questioned whether attaining food autarky after overcoming a food deficit of 40 lakh tons or increase of calorie intake is destruction of the country.

Hasina mentioned the one-

house-one-firm, Asrayan and other welfare projects of the government where women were given priority. She said all these enhanced the economic condition of the women for ensuring their rights in the society.

She said the government has also taken special measures for establishing equal rights of the women in the society and for the empowerment of women through their education and economic freedom.

The Prime Minister thanked the Mohila Sangstha for naming the building after her mother Begum Jatiyunnisa Mujib and recalled her contribution to the nation.

She said her mother inspired Bangabandhu in every movement from behind the scene and sacrificed a lot for the nation. "My mother had taken bold steps for the independence of the country and also worked for the development of women."

JP, Jamaat observe peaceful hartal in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The dawn-to-dusk hartal in greater Chittagong called by Jamaat and a faction of JP led by its vice-chairman Ibrahim bin Khalil, was observed peacefully yesterday.

JP faction called the hartal demanding release of their party chairman H M Ershad while Jamaat in protest against Saturday's killing of one of its activists in Satkania.

The hartal failed to draw much attention in the city as BNP and the other faction of JP opposed the call considering the upcoming SSC examinations.

In the city, vehicles plied the roads while shops and markets remained open.

Meanwhile, the city unit of four-party opposition alliance held a rally at Laldighi maidan with city BNP president Meer Mohammad Nasruddin in the chair.

Speakers at the rally demanded immediate resignation of the government to pave the way for general elections in May.

Shahed Latif

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WASA, Shahed Latif left behind his wife, one son, one daughter and a host of relatives, friends and admirers to mourn his death.

The namaj-e-janaza for Shahed Latif was held at the Eskaton Gardens mosque after Asr prayers yesterday. He was buried at the Banani graveyard in the afternoon.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina accompanied by her sister Sheikh Rehana visited the Eskaton residence of Shahed Latif yesterday morning. The Prime Minister talked to Mrs. Latif and consoled her.

In a condolence message yesterday, the Prime Minister expressed her deep sympathy for the members of the bereaved family and prayed for peace of the departed soul.

The qulshkhwani of the deceased will be held on March 16 (Friday) after Asr prayers at his 11 Eskaton Gardens residence.

8 dacoits held

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chasing the gang.

Sensing police presence behind their vehicles, the dacoits started firing police also returned fire.

Exchange of fire continued when the gangsters drove through Oxygen, Nasirabad, GEC square, Dhaka Trunk Road and Hathazari Road covering about 25km.

When the dacoits reached near the Golf Club of Bangladesh Military Academy at Bhatiali, they stopped, jumped from the vehicles and tried to flee to the nearby jungle. Police arrested eight of the gang while others managed to flee. The truck and the microbus they used were also seized.

The arrested are Mohammad Ali Hossain, Abdul Mannan, Alamgir Hossain, Babul Ahmed, Abul Bashar, Mohammadullah, Ahmed Hossain and Jahangir Alam.

Police took the arrested to Hathazari thana where they were being interrogated.

During interrogation the dacoits confessed their involvement in some other incidents of dacoity in Chittagong port city, Raozan, Hathazari, Fatikchhari and other districts.

Allies to press BNP for power

FROM PAGE 1
Khaleda Zia would become the Prime Minister. So, BNP must agree to certain concessions.

"Khaleda would definitely concede to the JP demand for 80 seats, even if her senior party leaders opposes the idea to brighten her chances of becoming the prime minister."

JP is also pressing the allies for a consensus on the head of the next caretaker government. Also, it wants the others to support its opposition to the incumbent Chief Election Commissioner.

JP has expressed reservation against former immediate-past Chief Justice Latifur Rahman becoming the chief advisor of the

caretaker government and also against CECMASyed.

JP Secretary General Nazir Rahman Manzur said, "BNP should allocate as many seats to JP as it deserves."

He, however, declined to elaborate on the number of seats his party is demanding. "The alliance should, above all, keep in mind that AL should by no way return to power for successive terms."

According to source, Jamaat would be comfortable, even if BNP refused to give it more than 20 seats.

Issue of seat-sharing aside, Jamaat is giving more focus on the post-election period when formation of a coalition government

would be the crucial issue. From the 1991 and 1996 election experiences, Jamaat has resolved that neither BNP nor AL would share power with it although the party was with them during pre-polls movement on both occasions.

IOJ acting secretary general Ahmed Abdul Kader told The Daily Star that his party was yet to finalise its position on seat sharing.

"While resolving the seat sharing issue, our alliance should bear in mind that AL must not make a comeback," he said.

Kader also said IOJ could not go for election with its main leaders languishing behind the bar. The alliance had to move for their release before the election, he added.

1039 Mongla port dock workers to retire voluntarily

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

One thousand and thirty-nine dock workers of the Mongla port will go on voluntary retirement within one month under "Golden Handshake Scheme".

The sum of taka two crore has been sanctioned for helping the retired dock workers for getting jobs elsewhere other than Mongla port.

The Dock Workers' Management Board sources said the decision was taken unanimously at a meeting recently. The Stevedores' Association leaders attended the meeting.

Rab Murder Case

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Khashrul said the investigation would have been better with one more month in hand for submitting the charge sheet. "I was never influenced by any political leader for twisting the fact," he said.

He said hands of godfathers of the accused are stronger. Because, they get information in advance of what is being done by IO with this case.

Two godfathers of the accused have already left the country. They not only masterminded the murder, but also financed the alleged killers, he said.

JP enforces hartal in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Local unit of the Jatiya Party (JP) enforced a dawn-to-dusk hartal in Rangpur yesterday demanding release of their party chairman H M Ershad.

Shops, business establishments and educational institutions remained closed and vehicles were off the roads.

Pro-hartal activists set fire to a motorbike at Shapla crossing in the town during hartal hours.

Outlaws

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committing murders and for toll collection.

The activists of the two outlawed groups are moving in the guise of rickshawpullers, van drivers, boatmen, day labourers and vendors making it difficult to identify them, said a top ranking intelligence officer.

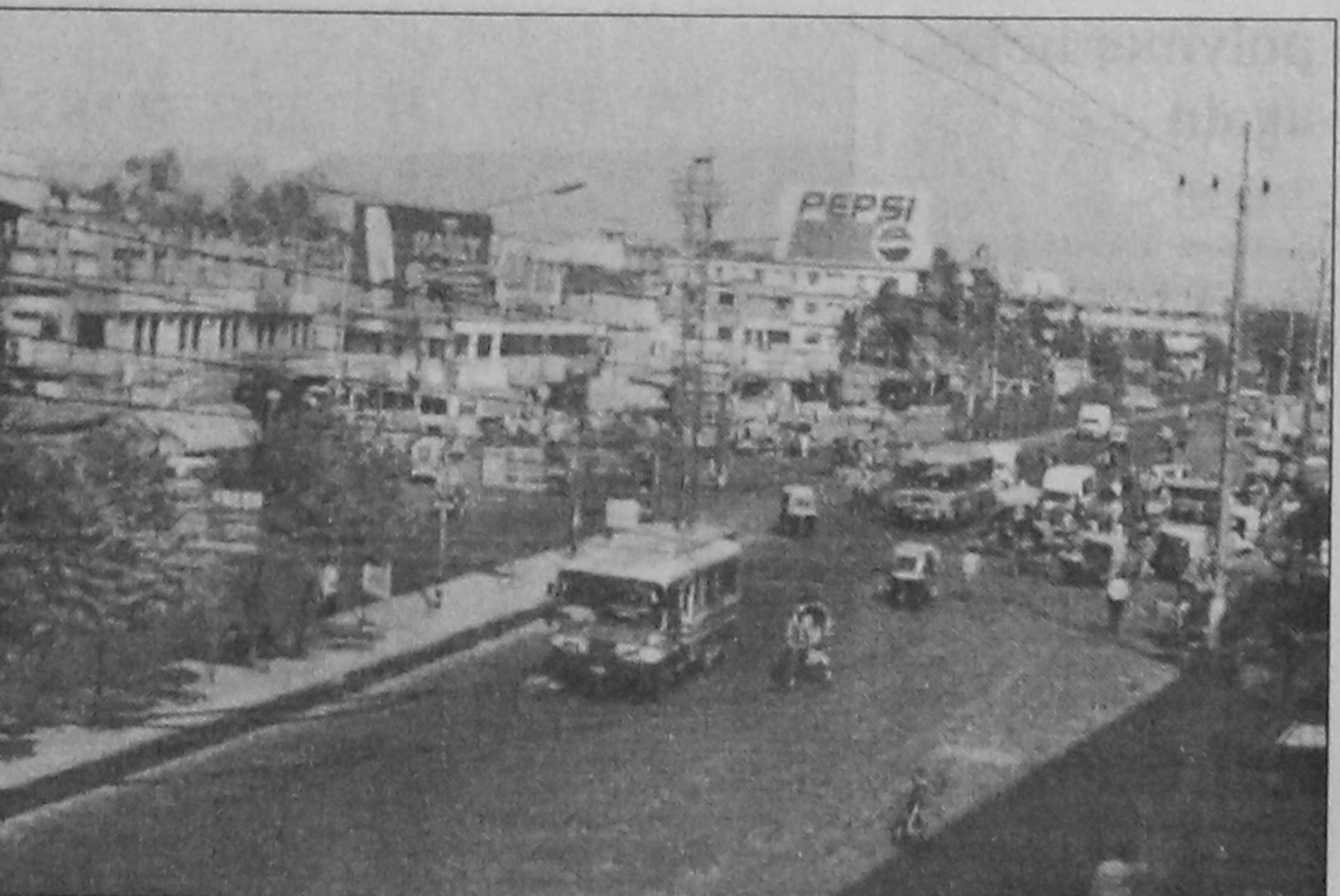
Jalal's wife

FROM PAGE 12
said Halima, suspecting involvement of relatives of the killers behind this. Relatives of the killers were expecting that she would bend and accept the offer of money as her son became unemployed, she said.

"I am even ready to work as a maid and accept all the sufferings of my children. But I will not do anything which will let the killers escape justice".

Halima, who is now living in a two room tin-shed house at Mohammadpur in the city, said she can not think of a better accommodation for her children as no landlord wants to rent house to the family of a murdered police informer.

In April last year, Halima appealed to the Prime Minister in writing for help.



Traffic in Muradpur area of Chittagong during the hartal hours in the port city yesterday.

আজ বাজারে ২০০০

ভালোবাসার অনেক রঙ। চাওয়া ও পাওয়ার সহজ হিসাব যেমন, তেমনি আছে আবিষ্কারের বাসনা। প্রেমের সাতকাহনই ২০০০-এর এবারের প্রচ্ছদ কাহিনী

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প্রেমের সাত স্তর +

অবেধ অস্ত্র পৃথিবীতে প্রতিবছর সংহার করছে ৭ লাখ মানুষ ...

২০০০ হৃদয় জানালায় আপনার হৃদয়ের কথা বলুন। প্রবাস জীবনের কথা পড়ুন প্রবাসীদের কাছ থেকে ..

২০০০ সজীব সচল বাংলাদেশের স্থির প্রতিকৃতি

৯৬/৯৮ নিউ ইস্টন, ঢাকা-১০০০ ফোন : পিএবিএক্স : ৯০০০৯১-৩ সার্কুলেশন : ৯০৫৯৯৫৯