



## Amartya Sen due today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nobel laureate Professor Amartya Sen arrives in the city today to address a two-day taskforce meeting on a Citizen's Social Charter for South Asia as a guest of honour.

Former chief advisor of the caretaker government Justice Habibur Rahman will inaugurate the programme jointly organised by the South Asia Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS) and Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

Professor Rehman Sobhan, executive chairperson of the SACEPS and chairman of the CPD, will preside over the inaugural session of the meeting scheduled at the BRAC centre auditorium.

The programme will be attended by nine representatives from South Asian countries including India, Nepal, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan, a press release of the CPD

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## 9 killed, 35 hurt in Rangpur road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

At least nine people were killed and 35 others injured in a road accident on Rangpur-Dhaka highway at Baldipukur under Mithapukur upazila yesterday.

Police quoting witnesses said the accident took place at about 10.30 am when a Chapainawaganj bound BRTC bus coming from Panchagarh collided with a Rangpur bound truck coming from the capital city.

Three people died on the spot and four succumbed to their injuries on way to the RMCH and two others died following admission.

The victims were identified as Adori, 7, Jahanara, 50, Nasrin Akther Moli, 18, Abdus Salam, 28, Manik Chandra Barman, 32, Gaffar Ali, 25, Akkas Ali Mondal, 40, Idris Ali, 23 and Abu Bakar, 28.

After the accident, local people rushed to the spot, rescued the injured passengers and sent them to

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Dec 12	6-32 am	5-13 pm
Dec 13	6-32 am	5-13 pm

  

Prayer Timings		
Dec 12		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-15	5-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-13	5-18
Esha	7-30	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

## Bogra businessman dies after army arrest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A businessman, who was picked up by the army, died at the Mohammad Ali Hospital in Bogra in the early hours of yesterday.

An army team from the Dupchanchia camp picked up Abdus Sattar, 50, from his residence at Masterpara village at about 1:30am on Tuesday on charge of involvement in drug and arms trading.

Our Bogra correspondent reported that the businessman fell sick soon after he was taken to the army camp. As his condition deteriorated, he was rushed to the Dupchanchia Health Complex.

Later, Sattar was shifted to the Mohammad Ali Hospital at about 9:00 pm on Tuesday because his condition further deteriorated. A team of army physicians and specialists at the hospital examined him.

The businessman died at the hospital at about 1:20 am yesterday. Immediately after his death, army per-

sonnel restricted movement of people at the hospital, except the doctors on duty.

The inquest and autopsy were done in presence of a first class magistrate and police officials. Sattar's body was sent to his village at about 12:40 pm yesterday under army supervision.

Local army sources told newsmen that Sattar had been suffering from diabetes, blood pressure and heart diseases. He died of heart attack.

One of the sources said Sattar attempted to run away from a toilet at the army camp. As the army personnel prevented him from escaping, a scuffle broke out and he (Sattar) was injured.

Hospital sources said there were marks of injuries and bruises in different parts of Sattar's body.

Family members of the deceased refused to accept his body saying they (army) have to prove that he was criminal.

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## Shinawatra to accompany Khaleda to Thailand today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will leave for Chiang Mai today on a three-day official visit to Thailand.

In a rare gesture, Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra will arrive in Chittagong this morning to accompany Khaleda to his country.

The Thai prime minister along with a 80-member high-profile delegation will arrive at Chittagong Airport on a special aircraft at 11:00am. Khaleda will receive him at the airport.

The two prime ministers will jointly inaugurate Thai Airways service between Chiang Mai and Chittagong. The programme will be marked with a brief cultural

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## Tax drive soon against professionals

UNB, Dhaka

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) will now bring more professionals, deluxe restaurants and shopping malls into its dragnet to make up the shortfall in income tax collection.

The NBR crossed its revenue target by Tk 151.64 crore in July-November period of the current fiscal but was trailing behind the income tax target by about Tk 140 crore.

Facing Finance Minister Saifur Rahman's wrath for the failure in a meeting today, the board authorities planned fresh hunts for netting new taxpayers among doctors, engineers and lawyers in the next couple of months.

It will also make vigorous drives

to explore other taxable areas like food shops and shopping complexes, revenue officials said.

Meeting sources said Saifur censured the income tax officials for their poor performance that overshadowed the successes in other areas of tax revenue. But he also listened to the administrative and procedural problems in collecting income tax and widening its base.

"They have explained their problems. They have given me assurance that they will be more active in future," the finance minister told reporters after the meeting in the ministry's conference room.

Loopholes in administrative procedures have been identified and corrective measures would be taken in the next two months. New

guidelines have been given for fresh hunts in under-explored areas of income tax, Saifur said.

Out of roughly 33,000 government and private doctors, only around 4,000 are listed with the tax department, he pointed out. Many luxury restaurants and shopping centres also remain out of tax net, he added.

"So far we could not give much attention to these areas," said Saifur.

There are roughly 1.3 million income taxpayers, leaving the tax-GDP ratio at around 12 per cent, which is lower even by regional count. NBR officials said they had targeted 250,000 more taxpayers during this fiscal.

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Devotees are streaming into the venue for Biswa Ijtema on the bank of the Turag in Tongi yesterday. About two million people from around the world are scheduled to join the second largest congregation of the Muslims slated to start tomorrow.

PHOTO: STAR

## Power trouble cripples air quality monitoring

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Since its launch eight months back, the air quality monitoring station at the Sangsad Bhaban has not yet produced any valid data on pollution of the city's air.

The station, a component of the Tk 30 crore Air Quality Management Project (AQMP), was installed in March this year to constantly monitor and measure air pollutants and produce daily data on air quality.

Project officials claim lack of adequate power supply has rendered the station inoperative.

Besides, its hydrocarbon-measuring machine has also gone out of order. The officials say they are now waiting for an uninterruptible power supply (UPS) unit to be imported from Australia to

properly run the machine. Meanwhile, the particulate matter measuring equipment detected an extremely high density of pm10 (particulate matter less than 10 microns) and pm2.5 (particulate matter less than 2.5 microns) in the capital's atmosphere.

However, the officials are not sure about the reading and will not make it public "until further tests are done".

Project consultant John Core says it may take a few years to ascertain the readings of these sophisticated machines.

He and the project officials claim the World Bank-funded project is being implemented to introduce modern equipment in the air quality management and create a group of skilled manpower.

According to Department of Environment (DoE) sources, the air quality monitoring station has machines to measure both gaseous and particulate pollutants.

Two months after launch, the data acquisition system for gaseous pollutant has gone out of order due to irregular power supply.

A 2KVA UPS was imported for the station but proved inadequate. Now, there is a move to import a 5KVA UPS. Until the new UPS came, running the machine would be risky, the DoE sources said.

Besides, the project staffs are not properly trained to operate the machine and analyse the data. They are equipped with only a five-day training which is not enough, they said.

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## Over one million cases in logjam

Moudud promises changes to civil law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More than one million cases are now pending with different district courts in the country, disclosed Law Minister Moudud Ahmed yesterday.

And, more than one lakh cases are pending with the High Court and Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, he added.

The civil law will be amended soon for a quick disposal of the cases, the minister assured.

At a roundtable organised by the Bangladesh chapter of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) at the Sonargaon Hotel, Moudud said 80 to 90 per cent of the pending cases are minor and filed by the poor.

He underscored a new mechanism to ensure quick judgement and people's easy access to justice.

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## Transport strike in greater Ctg Dec 18

BSS, Chittagong

Purbanchaliya Sarak Paribahan Malik Sramik Oykya Parishad (PSPMSOP), a federation of different trade unions and owners' organisations, has called a dawn-to-dusk transport strike on December 18 in greater Chittagong demanding release of their leader Yakub Ali.

Yakub, General Secretary of the Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation's Chittagong and Sylhet divisions was arrested recently by the law enforcing agencies for his alleged involvement in illegal toll collection from transports particularly in the Chittagong Port area.

He was also charged for his alleged involvement in various of crimes including smuggling through Chittagong Port.

The decision to call transport strike was taken at a meeting of PSPMSOP held yesterday afternoon

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## 30 children languishing in West Bengal homes

SAKYASEN MITRA, Kolkata

More than 30 Bangladeshi children trafficked to India have been languishing in different government homes in West Bengal for the last two years.

Lack of action by the relevant departments of the West Bengal state government has forced the kids to stay away from their home for such a long time.

Asked about their inaction, sources concerned said they are handicapped because the state's Juvenile Justice Board has not yet started to function. The board was formed in May this year but the rules for its functioning are yet to be made.

"This is a shocking failure, more so because other states in the country such as Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra have already implemented the Juvenile Justice (care

and protection of children) Act 2000," one source noted.

Social Welfare Minister of West Bengal Biswanath Choudhury, however, seems least concerned over the issue. "The rules have been drafted and they have been sent to the judicial department. Once they are finalised, the children will be sent back," is all that he said. When pointed out that he had been repeating the statement for the last three months, he commented, "The process of law should not be hampered. The children will have to stay here as long as the rules are not finalised."

Officials of the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission in Kolkata are also at a loss as to what they can do to get the kids back home. "Over the last 18 months, we have been trying to repatriate 30 Bangladeshi children who had been

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## PDB refutes WB review

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Power Development Board (PDB) on Tuesday protested a recent World Bank (WB) review that said the state-owned enterprise's performance was unsatisfactory.

The PDB said in a statement that as far as the record is concerned, its performance was very satisfactory despite the odds.

It however admitted that it had been incurring loss due to the odd pricing, which is lower than the production cost.

The PDB said the lower tariff (Tk 2.25/kWh in financial year (FY) 2001) compared to higher cost of supply (Tk 2.57/kWh in FY 2001) which includes higher cost of power purchase from the independent power plants (Barge-mount Power Plant and Rural Power Company), exchange rate fluctuation loss, high interest rate etc. is mainly responsible for the loss of PDB.

It also claimed that the WB's contention that the PDB's loss stood at Tk 460 crore during the 2002 fiscal is not correct as the accounts of 2002 is yet to be complete.

Also, the WB conclusion that the PDB's unsatisfactory performance

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## Foodgrains under OMS being sold in black market

Dealer detained in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Poor people in the district are not getting foodgrains sold under open market sale (OMS) programme as major portions of the supplies are allegedly being sold in black market by dealers.

Sources at the district food controller's office yesterday said 979 tonnes of rice and 180 tonnes of wheat were supplied to dealers for sale under OMS through 79 sales centres in the district since the programme was launched on November 4.

But most of the supplies did not reach the sales centres. Those were sold to traders who hoarded those, sources said.

One dealer-- Mujibur Rahman of Vedvedi -- was picked up by army and handed over to police after the sold the allotted foodgrains to one trader, Siddique Ahmed. Army personnel also recovered 20 sacks of OMS foodgrains from Siddique's shop at Vedvedi. A case was filed with Kotwali police in this regard, ASI Raton Barua said.

Sources in different areas of the district said hardly any sales centre is found open after noon although those are supposed to sell the OMS foodgrains from 9 am to 4 pm. This correspondent also found two sales centres at Kathaltoli and Bonorupa in the town closed after noon on Monday.

When contacted, District Controller of food Swapon Kumar Bonik avoided talking on the issue, saying he was in a hurry to go to Chittagong.