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CNG AUTORICKSHAW IMPORT

## Huda draws JS body flak over scam charge

### Sub-committee formed to probe allegation of favouring one company

SHAKHAWAT LITON

A parliamentary standing committee yesterday took a swipe at Communications Minister Nazmul Huda for what it said was corruption in import and distribution of CNG autorickshaws, an allegation he denied outright.

Members of the parliamentary standing committee on communications ministry told a temper-high meeting at the Sangsad Bhaban that a CNG (compressed natural gas) autorickshaw sold at up to Tk 3.67 lakh, up from the actual price at Tk 1.67 lakh as a result of monopoly by Utara Motors.

The parliamentary body accused the communications ministry of

favouring Utara Motors, allowing it to have monopoly on the business, as the company is the sole importer of CNG autorickshaws.

"No anomaly crept into import and distribution of CNG autorickshaws," meeting sources quoted Huda as saying in defence. Utara Motors, allowed to import

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## Eight killed in Manikganj road accident

UNB, Manikganj

Eight people, including an Indian national, were killed and two others injured in a road accident at Muljan in Sadar upazila on the Dhaka-Aricha Highway yesterday morning.

Police and witnesses said the accident took place at about 10:00am when a Manikganj-bound tempo, carrying 10 passengers, crashed into a coach, leaving six passengers of the three-wheeler dead on the spot and four others injured.

Two of the injured died on the way to hospital.

The dead are Ratan of Jazra village, Ali Azam of Kutai village, Khorsheed of Gultia village, Shahidul Islam and Milon of Dautia village.

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## Over 700 acres of city state land gobbled up

REZAUL KARIM

Over 700 acres of khas (government-owned) land and vested property in the capital are in the possession of landgrabbers.

The government appears unable to recover the illegally occupied property due to loopholes in the relevant laws.

According to a land ministry estimate, there are 1,800 acres khas, abandoned and vested property land in Dhaka and its adjoining areas.

Of the total, around 650 acres of khas land, 109 acres of abandoned land and 997 acres of vested property are in five circles of the capital --

all non-agricultural land.

The government-formed Secretary Committee on recovery of illegally occupied land has recommended major changes to the existing laws to do the job and stop the trend of land-grab.

Headed by Cabinet Secretary Saadat Hussain, the 11-member committee observed that although the laws provide for punishing the illegal occupants, they lacked proper guidelines and provisions to resist encroachment on lands. The committee said articles 427, 447, 448 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), which deal with punishment to the encroachers, are outdated and suggested making those

stricter.

The committee identified dishonest real estate companies, organised gangs of frauds, criminals, a section of industry owners, political activists and a number of trusts and organisations as the real culprits behind the land-grab.

A land ministry survey shows 228 acres of khas land in Kotwali, Demra and Dhanmondi circles are under illegal occupation. Out of 997 acres of vested property, around 480 acres have been encroached on.

The Kotwali circle comprises Kotwali, Sutrapur, Wari, Dayaganj, Ramna, Baro Moghbazar, Kakrail and Mahmud Nagar areas, Demra

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PHOTO: AKM MOHSIN

A dredging vessel continues work on the Buriganga river yesterday despite protests by encroachers claiming to own riverside land. Scores of 'landowners' milled around the site with documents they call valid, but BIWTC engineers determined to press on with their dredging plan.

## Owners spring up as Buriganga gets dredged

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Dredging of the Buriganga began last week amid claims of ownership of its banks, foreshores and even the actual channel.

Scores of 'landowners' milled around the site with 'valid documents' to lay claims on the river as soon as a huge dredger anchored on the river near Washpur and Basila recently.

After several meetings with the BIWTC (Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation) officials, the 'owners' demarcated their land over large areas in and around the river with red flags and bamboo poles.

The BIWTC engineers at the site said that the ownership claims would not affect the dredging plans, although the flags have narrowed

down the river significantly. The Sub-assistant Engineer and in-charge of the dredging site Abdul Matin said they were dredging according to a hydrographic map prepared by experts.

On the land ownership claims and planting of red flags and the bamboo poles, he said that it was not necessary to have more than 'twenty or thirty feet' of open channel for smooth navigation.

Sources in the BIWTC said that the ongoing Tk 36 crore project to dredge about 30 kilometres of waterways and to build landing facilities along the Turag and Buriganga rivers is sure to face serious hurdles. An official of the Port Section of the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority

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## Border forces blame each other for harbouring terrorism

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, from New Delhi

The annual conference between Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) began here Tuesday amid charges of harbouring terrorism by both sides.

Director General of BDR Major General Jahangir Alam Chowdhury told reporters yesterday afternoon that he will submit a list of 90 camps in West Bengal and Tripura allegedly run for propagation of separatism in Bangladesh.

Jahangir at separate meetings --

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## BSF kills 2 villagers, trades fire with BDR

BSS, Rajshahi

Two Bangladeshis were gunned down by the Border Security Force (BSF) of India near Chalkpara border under Shibganj upazila in Chapainawabganj district Tuesday, Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) sources said.

The dead are Afzal Hossain, 45, son of late Khorsheed Ali and Mattur Rahman, 35, son of Mantaj Ali of Chalkpara village.

The BDR quoted witnesses as saying a BSF team from Mallik

Sultanpur outpost in Maldah district entered the Bangladesh territory near the Chalkpara frontier at about 6:30pm and opened fire on the two while they were returning home from a bazaar. Both died on the spot.

After the incident, the BSF personnel again opened fire on the villagers without any provocation, the sources said.

Hearing the news, a BDR team went to the spot. And both the BDR and the BSF were locked in exchange of fire that continued for

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## Export sector to get loans at 7pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All banks yesterday promised to set lending rate for the export sector at 7 percent instead of the current 6 to 10 percent.

The Bankers' Committee at a meeting presided over by Bangladesh Bank (BB) Governor Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday took the decision.

The meeting held at the Bangladesh Bank conference room also said the banks would not take the central bank's refinancing facility to lower the rate.

BB Deputy Governor Nazrul Huda speaking at the end of the meeting said banks will reduce the lending rate for certain priority sectors.

The interest rates on lending for

the agriculture and small- and medium-enterprise (SME) sectors are going to be pegged at 10 percent.

Huda added that the meeting reviewed BB's intentions to reduce lending rates to increase investment and employment.

He said BB cancelled a circular that was to be issued to reduce export sector lending rates to 7 percent as the banks themselves announced the reduction yesterday.

The central bank has warned the chief executives against their failure to pass any information about illegal bank transactions including hundi on to the central bank. It added that if any illegal transaction is to be found in BB inspection, then the CEOs will be held liable.

The CEOs said it is nearly impos-

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## Vajpayee wishes to visit Dhaka

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has expressed his willingness to visit Bangladesh at a convenient time.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, at a press briefing at his office yesterday evening, said the Indian premier showed interest to visit Bangladesh at an exclusive meeting with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on the sidelines of Saarc Summit in Islamabad.

"The foreign minister-level meeting between the two countries will set the schedule of his arrival," Morshed said.

Termining their exclusive meeting successful, the foreign minister said the two premiers, among other issues, discussed fight against terrorism and water-sharing.

India has offered a \$150 million

credit to improve Bangladesh's rail communications system, he said adding that it has also offered to provide two computers in each district and a trained teacher to enhance computer literacy in Bangladesh.

Vajpayee thanked Khaleda for sealing the border when Indian forces launched an anti-insurgency drive in Bhutan two weeks ago. Khaleda also said Bangladesh never allowed any Indian insurgents to operate inside its territory and it will never do so, the foreign minister said.

He also shared some important points discussed during the PM's exclusive meeting with Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf.

"Their talks focussed on widening mutual cooperation," Morshed said adding that they have also decided to increase the number of student scholarships.

Advertisement

দারুল ইহসান ট্রাস্টের বার্ষিক সভা অনুষ্ঠিত

ANNUAL MEETING OF DARUL IHSAN TRUST

দারুল ইহসান ট্রাস্টের চেয়ারম্যান ও সউদী পার্লামেন্টের সাবেক ডেপুটি স্পীকার ডঃ আব্দুল্লাহ ওমর নাসিফ এর সভাপতিত্বে বিগত ২০/১২/২০০৩ তারিখে দারুল ইহসান ট্রাস্টের বার্ষিক সভা শেরাটন হোটেলের অডিটোরিয়ামে অনুষ্ঠিত হয়। সভায় স্থানীয় ট্রাস্ট সদস্য ছাড়াও বিদেশী ট্রাস্টি সদস্য ও দাতা সংস্থার বিশিষ্ট ব্যক্তিবর্গ উপস্থিত ছিলেন। দারুল ইহসান ট্রাস্টের সেক্রেটারী জনাব এস এইচ মুনিরুজ্জামান ও বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ভারপ্রাপ্ত ভাইস-চ্যান্সেলর প্রফেসর ডঃ মুহম্মদ আযহার-উদ-দীন বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের বার্ষিক পরিস্থিতির উপর রিপোর্ট পেশ করেন। উক্ত সভায় ২০০১-২০০২ সালের অডিট রিপোর্ট পর্যালোচনা করা হয় এবং ২০০২ - ২০০৩ সালের জন্য অডিটর নিয়োগের জন্য সুপারিশ করা হয়। ট্রাস্টের এই গুরুত্বপূর্ণ সভায় বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের স্থায়ী ক্যাম্পাস নির্মাণের পরিকল্পনা অনুমোদন করা হয়। ট্রাস্টের চেয়ারম্যান বিদেশ থেকে আগত সকল সদস্যকে দারুল ইহসান বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের কর্মকাণ্ডে সার্বিক সহযোগিতা প্রদানের জন্য ধন্যবাদ জ্ঞাপন করেন।

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