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## PM asks Altaf to control market strictly

STAR REPORT

In the face of unusual price hike of essentials, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday called Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury to her office and asked him to control the market strictly, sources said.

Earlier, the commerce minister told reporters that he would meet the prime minister to discuss starting open market sale (OMS) of rice to make a positive impact on the market.

"We are continuously monitoring the market. If necessary, we can start OMS within a few hours," Food Secretary-in-Charge Siddiqur Rahman Choudhury told The Daily

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

## No respite from spiralling prices

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the absence of any effective government intervention to arrest spiralling prices of essentials and despite assurance from ministers, people in the low and middle-income brackets continued to have their purses dented heavily in the capital's kitchen markets.

The prices of rice, seasonal vegetables and the ingredients of Iftar items are still soaring, although there were no noticeable shortage of supply of the commodities in the capital's wholesale and kitchen markets.

Hard-pushed by the price hikes,

opposition political activists yesterday demonstrated against the government's failure to rein in the essentials market. They held rallies and took out processions in Dhaka.

Activists of the Awami League-backed Jubo League took out a procession, with some of carrying the most pricey vegetables but police clubbed and dispersed the protestors on Bangabandhu Avenue.

At least a dozen Jubo League activists were injured in the police action that prompted the main opposition party to plan more anti-price hike rallies in all wards of

SEE PAGE 11, COL 1

## BNP top men unhappy over market trend

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Skyrocketed prices of essentials in the month of Ramadan have stirred the ranks of the ruling BNP who are unhappy with the government's 'inaction' in tackling the situation.

A number of senior leaders of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) have expressed discontent over the government's indifference to taking measures to keep the prices of essentials within the buying capacity of the commoners. They were talking to The Daily Star seeking anonymity.

They said though there is a tendency to hike prices of some

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

## Tk 4.62cr graft in 9 civil surgeon's offices

JS body calls it a partial picture

SHAKHAWAT LITON

A parliamentary probe body investigating irregularities in only nine civil surgeon's offices and found Tk 4.62 crore in corruption, which it says was only a partial picture.

"It's a syndicated theft," said Abdullah M Taher, convenor of the parliamentary sub-committee on corruption in civil surgeon's (CS)

offices, placing the probe report at a meeting of the Public Accounts Committee (Pac) yesterday.

The Pac however apprehend that the syndicate has embezzled as much as Tk 109 crore in purchasing equipment and medicine for 17 CS offices across the country.

"We have found a tip of an iceberg....The actual amount is much

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

## Angry JCD men lock up Ctg hospital for 3 hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

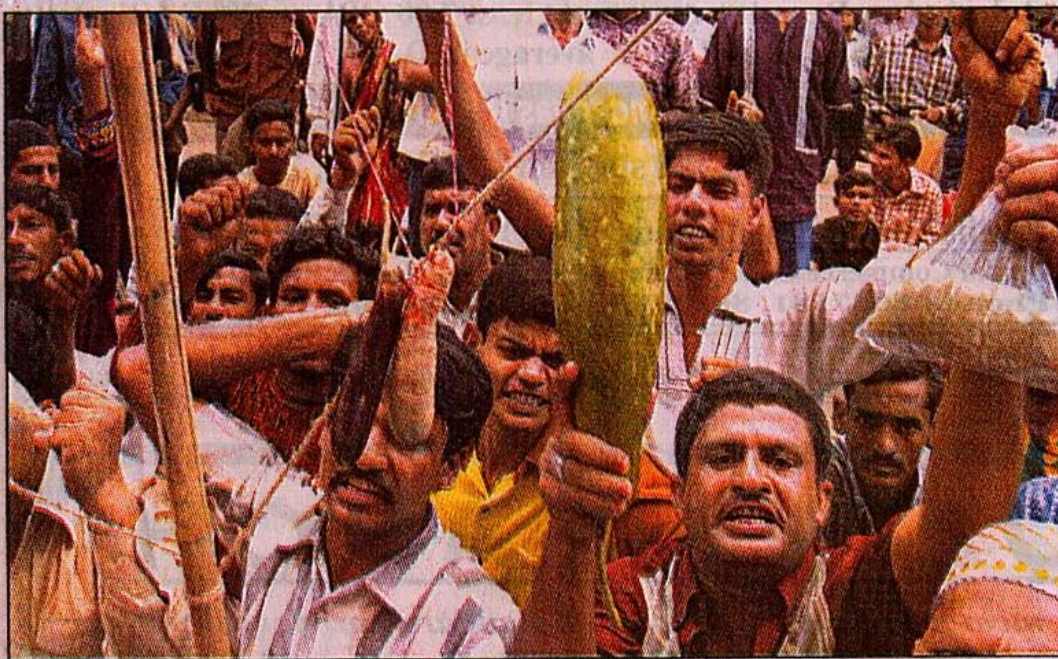
All activities and services at Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) were disrupted for nearly three hours yesterday as some unruly outsiders backed by Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leaders and activists went on a wildcat agitation keeping all departments under lock and key from 10:30am.

Apart from emergency and wards, the usual hospital activities and services came to a standstill till 1:00pm yesterday due to the demonstration.

The agitators were unhappy that the recent appointments of some fourth class employees at the CMCH were not done following the proper rules, sources said.

But official sources said the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6



Activists of Jubo League, youth front of Bangladesh Awami League, demonstrate on the Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday against the skyrocketing prices of essential commodities, especially vegetables.

## Closure of 8 pvt universities recommended

Report submitted to PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A high-powered committee to evaluate performance of the country's 53 private universities has recommended shutting down eight for violating rules and regulations.

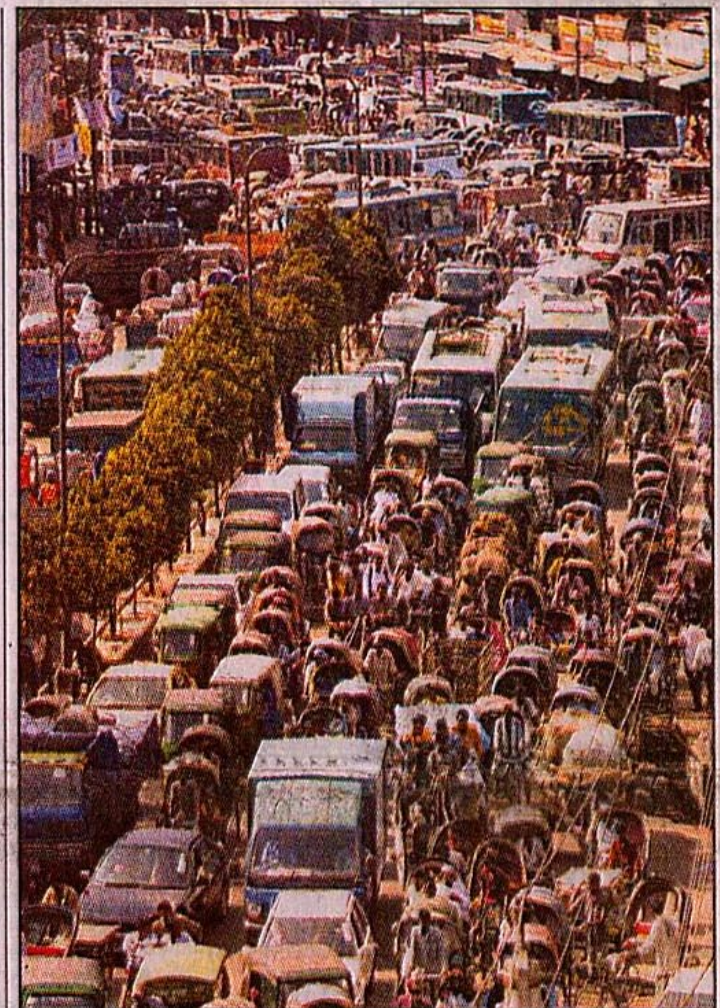
The eight-member committee headed by its convenor Dr M Asaduzzaman, chairman of the University Grants Commission (UGC), submitted its report to the prime minister yesterday, BBC radio said.

The committee has found 18

universities not following the government rules. However, it spared 10 considering their overall performance satisfactory and gave them different deadlines of two and one and a half years to meet the requirements.

"A few universities are functioning accordingly. But most of them are run by only part-time teachers with miserable academic programmes," Prof Asaduzzaman told the BBC. Some of them have opened some departments, which

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



After a dawn-to-dusk rickshaw strike on Saturday, the non-motorised three-wheelers are back to the streets yesterday causing traffic congestion as usual. The photograph was taken at city's English Road.

## IG says no foreign link to bomb blasts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The inspector general (IG) of police recently said no international link has been found to the recent spate of bomb blasts, a claim that contradicts the government's one-member judicial commission, which hinted at the link of a 'foreign enemy' to the August 21 grenade attack.

"(A) Few bomb blast incidents occurred in the recent past, but most of them (bombs) are locally made. (The) Bangladesh Government promulgated special anti-terrorism law(s) such as Speedy Trial Tribunal Act to combat these (crime) trends. However, no international link has been found (to) these incidents," IG Shahudul Haque said at the 73rd Interpol General Assembly in Mexico on October 7.

The Police Headquarters made available copies of his speech to the press yesterday.

He, however, admitted in the speech that none of the dozen incidents of bomb blasts and grenade attacks that have taken place since 1999 could be unearthed.

Only four days before Shahudul's disclosure, Justice Joynul Abedin, the government-appointed head of the one-member judicial commission on the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League rally hinted to the media at the link of a foreign

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

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Corporate Office :  
Summit Centre, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka.  
Tel : (02) 9130845 - 52  
Fax : (02) 9130853 - 54  
E-mail : ocl@ocibd.com

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## All districts under Rab watch

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) operations were expanded in all the 64 districts since Saturday night to clamp down on crime across the country during Ramadan and Durga Puja.

Members of the Rab had already started moving to the districts on a home ministerial instruction.

Rab sources said besides routine anti-crime operations, Rab will ensure security at Puja Mandaps.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner Ashraf Huda told The Daily Star yesterday that they have directed 70 teams of

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

## LPG price shoots up in Bogra

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

The price of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) has shot up by more than Tk 200 per cylinder in Bogra as soon as the month of Ramadan began.

Local LPG dealers are now selling a cylinder of LPG, widely used for cooking in the northern region, between Tk 530 and Tk 550 as against the government rate of Tk 340. Just before Ramadan, the price was Tk 390 to Tk 420.

The dealers committed at a meeting on October 11 that they would not increase the price of LPG. Failing to keep their word, they are

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

## Army to guard against theft in CHT forest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

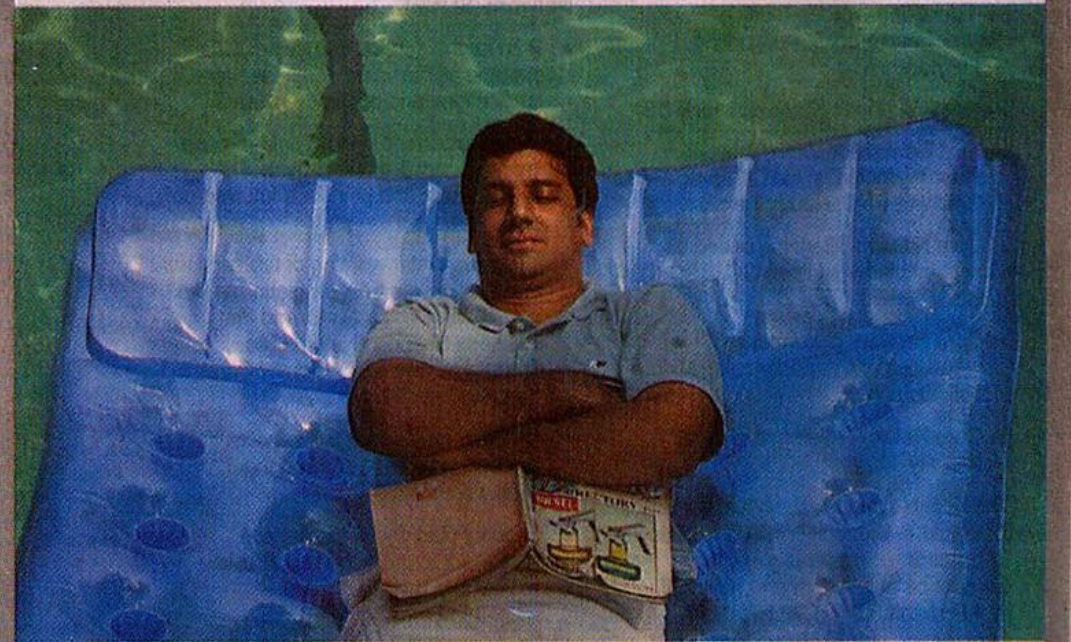
In the wake of increasing looting of forest resources in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), the government has asked the army to be on guard to stop such activities.

Official sources said the army has already started functioning in the CHT following a formal request made by the Environment and Forest Minister Tariqul Islam.

They also said that the decision to ask the army to guard the forest was taken after receiving reports from field level officers and intelligence agencies about massive and

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

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