

## HEROIN SMUGGLING TO UK

# More shipments detected

Death threats issued to investigating officers

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

Intelligence agencies have found out that the racket that had smuggled 75 kilogram heroin to the United Kingdom also trafficked another 72kg of the drug later to the same destination.

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and Special Branch

(SB) of police are now probing into the smuggling.

But, sources said, despite a home ministry directive to handle the case promptly, the CID, which is coordinating the investigation, is foot-dragging and is yet to file any case in this connection.

The agencies are investigating into the latest finding about the international drug smuggling ring,

although the UK customs have not informed them about it.

Intelligence sources said the smuggling racket also manifested its penchant for violence by issuing death threats to some intelligence officials through courier services yesterday.

The officials have informed their seniors about the threats and

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## Lightning kills 8

UNB, Comilla

Eight people, including an army man, were killed and three others were injured as they were struck by lightning in Comilla, Brahmanbaria and Dhaka yesterday.

In Comilla, three people were killed and two others injured by lightning in Burichang and Meghna upazilas.

The dead were identified as Farid Miah, 65, of Balilara village in Burichang upazila, Anu Miah of Shikrigaon village and Alauddin of Angar village in Meghna upazila.

Sources said the three were struck by lightning while working on their croplands at noon. They died instantly.

The injured, identified as Shamsul Haque and Abdul Haque of Burichang upazila, are undergoing

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# Blasts, clashes mark bid for young BCL leadership

Older, younger aspirants stage show of strength at council; new elected body to be declared today

DU CORRESPONDENT

Clashes between the younger activists and senior leaders of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) yesterday left at least 15 people injured as the council voted to elect new leadership for the student wing of Awami League (AL).

Junior leaders and workers in groups chased the ones already out of the leadership race due to the age limit for executive committee members, delaying the polling

scheduled to begin at 9:45am at the Institute of Engineers Bangladesh (IEB) auditorium.

Photographer of the Daily New Nation Shafiq Khan and reporter of Dainik Manabjamin Sabbir Newaz were among the injured. The other injured include BCL activists Meherul Hasan Sohel, Maruf Billah, Saiduzzaman Faruq, Sirajuddin, Mofijul Islam, Jobaidul Haq Rasel.

Voting began at around 3:00pm and ended at 9:10pm. While the

ballot boxes were being taken to Sudha Sadan, residence of AL Chief Sheikh Hasina, at around 9:25pm, the aggrieved leaders ransacked the auditorium building. They shouted slogans describing the election as a farce.

Shahjada Mohiuddin, convener of the council preparation committee, told The Daily Star that the ballot boxes were shifted to Shudha Sadan for security reasons. The party chief has issued strict

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## Clarification

The China National Machinery and Equipment Import and Export Corporation (CMEC) in a clarification on The Daily Star report headlined 'Harbin's Tongi Plant: Junk for Money' published Mondaysaid that the performance of the two 210 MW Raozan plants built by CMEC is not comparable to that of the 80MW Tongji plant.

The CMEC said that during 2003-05 each Raozan plant had tripped on average 2.5 times per year. Given the average records of tripping of the well-functioning power plants of Bangladesh, the track records of the Raozan plants are 'impressive'.

## DIALOGUE ON REFORM

# 14-party drafts reply to BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL)-led 14-party opposition coalition yesterday prepared a draft of the reply to BNP secretary general's invitation for dialogue. The reply is likely to be sent today favouring a dialogue only between AL and BNP.

A meeting of the 7-member committee to draft the letter was held yesterday at the residence of 14-party Co-ordinator Abdul Jalil in the evening, which decided to send the letter to BNP secretary general

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# Saarc home ministers meet in city May 11

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka will host the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) home ministers' meet on May 11.

The aim of the meeting is to strengthen co-operation among the member countries to check

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## Bangladesh on Time cover

Time magazine has run the cover story of its current issue on Bangladesh. The Asia edition of the internationally reputed news magazine also had exclusive interviews of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition

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# Commodity price hike pushes down consumption

STAR REPORT

As prices of essential commodities are on the rise, low and fixed income group people are being forced to buy or consume less than what they usually do.

Sales of certain essentials including sugar, powdered milk, pulses including lentil, onion, potato, garlic, ginger, green and dry chillies have gone down substantially in recent days as their prices have shot up significantly within a short span of time, traders said.

The price of sugar has more than doubled in the last six months hitting between Tk 62 and Tk 64 per kilogram (kg). Average sugar price

ranged between Tk 30 and Tk 32 per kg in September last year. But the price hit as high as Tk 70 a kg yesterday at neighbourhood grocery shops.

Prices of onion rose by 50 percent, potato 30 percent, garlic nine percent, and broiler chickens 13 percent within just a month, according to the daily monitoring report prepared yesterday by the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB).

Prices of lentil, eggs, palm oil, flour, fish (ruhi), beef and mutton have shot up between 3 to 9 percent yesterday than what the prices had been on March 4, the TCB report said.

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## Rain, hailstorm sweep Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Marking an end to the dry spell and sultry weather, torrential rainfall accompanied by hailstorm and gusty wind swept the capital yesterday evening.

The city-dwellers welcomed the first major rainfall of the season while the storm caused sufferings to many, especially the commuters. Almost the whole city plunged into darkness as its electricity distribution system collapsed at around 6:00pm, the power development board sources said. The system was restored after about two hours.

Different electricity distribution feeders and sub-stations tripped during the rain and storm.

Pieces of billboards and tree branches falling on the roads slowed down traffic movement in many parts of the city, witnesses said.

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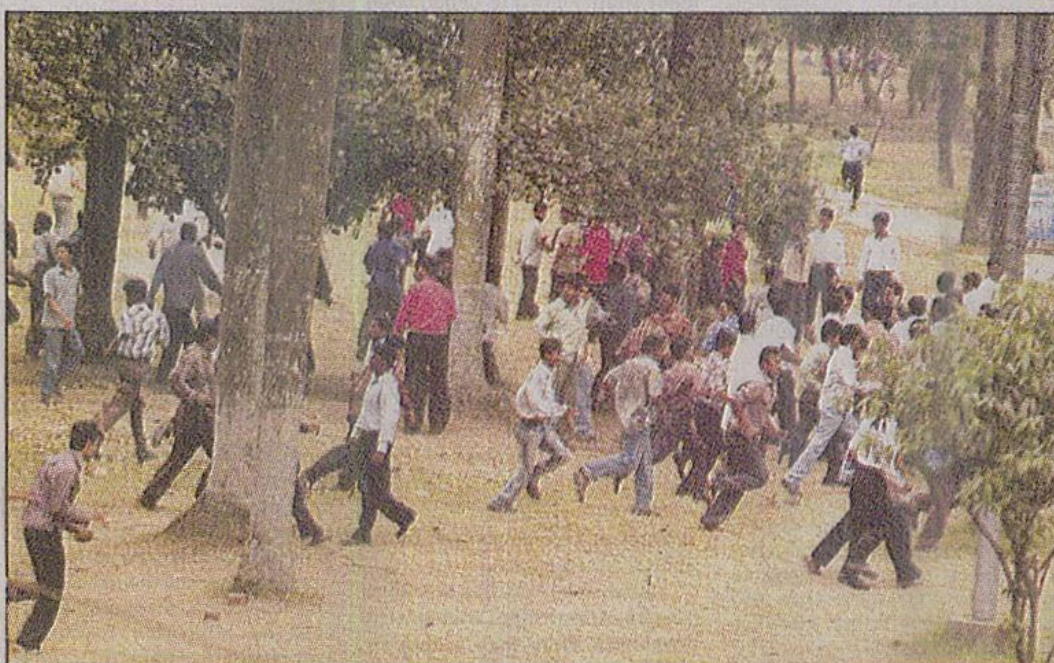
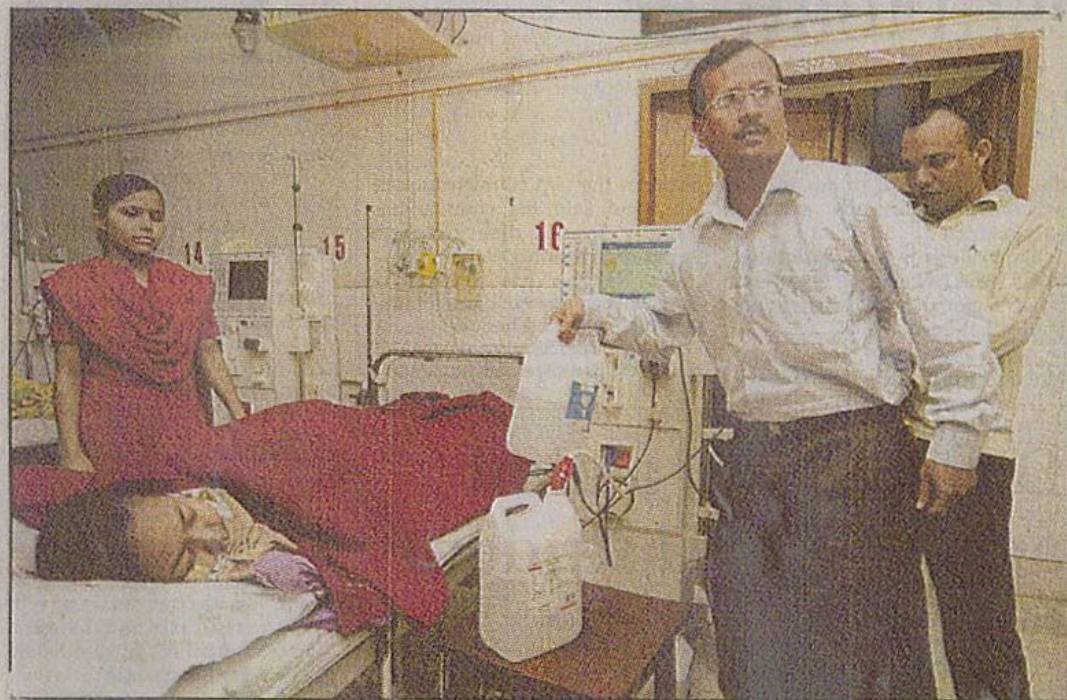


PHOTO: STAR

A group of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) activists chases another group into Suhrawardi Udyan yesterday as the feuding BCL groups clash before the start of their council session at the Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh in Dhaka.



Magistrate Rokon Ud Doula holds a container of date-expired fluid seized during a raid at the National Institute of Kidney Diseases and Urology in the capital. The fluid was being used for kidney dialysis on two patients yesterday when the mobile court made a surprise visit there.

## MOBILE COURT Date-expired fluid used for kidney dialysis seized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court yesterday seized a huge quantity of date-expired fluid and blood sugar tubes for kidney patients at National Institute of Kidney Diseases and Urology in the capital.

The drive was conducted following information from the patients, said Magistrate Rokon Ud Doula, who conducted the drive when dialyses of two patients were going on.

Going to the Haemodialysis ward of the institute at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar at 1:45pm yesterday, the court found Shahnaz Begum and MA Qasem were being given the fluid, which expired in November last year.

Sixteen open jars of fluid were

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# Thai PM to step down amid political crisis

Thaksin announces decision after meeting king

AFP, Bangkok

Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra said yesterday he will step down when parliament convenes after controversial weekend elections which the opposition boycotted.

The move follows weeks of street protests demanding Thaksin quit, and came after his political rivals rejected any compromise with the embattled premier.

"I will not accept the post of prime minister when the parliament convenes," he said in a 10-minute statement.

Thaksin made the announcement just hours after meeting the nation's revered King Bhumibol Adulyadej. He said he made his decision 'out of respect for the monarch.'

"My reason for not accepting the post of prime minister is because this year in an auspicious year for the king, whose 60th anni-

versary on the throne is just 60 days away," Thaksin said in a nationally televised press conference.

"I want all Thais to reunite," he said.

"I beg all Thais to sacrifice for the king. I apologise to my 16 million supporters that I cannot take the post of prime minister, but I will still carry on as a caretaker prime minister until my successor is chosen," he said.

"I will remain a member of parliament and the Thai Rak Thai party leader."

Earlier Tuesday the anti-government movement had vowed to launch a fresh wave of mass protests unless the premier resigned.

They made the threat even before final results from weekend elections had been announced, indicating that Thaksin's bid to end weeks of political instability by calling the early polls had failed.

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## CONDITIONS FOR DSC-4

# WB for raising fuel prices

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank (WB) yesterday urged the government to raise petroleum prices and enforce a low-cost, transparent financing plan for getting over the severe power crisis now dogging the country.

A WB mission led by its Senior Economist Sandeep Mahajan in a meeting with Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday conveyed the bank's prescription to the government for getting the fourth tranche of its Development Support Credit (DSC). WB Country Director Christine I Wallich was also present in the meeting.

The WB delegation advised the government to formulate and adopt a least-costly development plan, including a financing strategy, for the power sector and ensure that all investments are consistent with the plan, meeting sources said.

Bangladesh so far has received about \$700 million in three earlier tranches of the DSC and the fourth tranche may range between \$100 million and \$150 million, sources said.

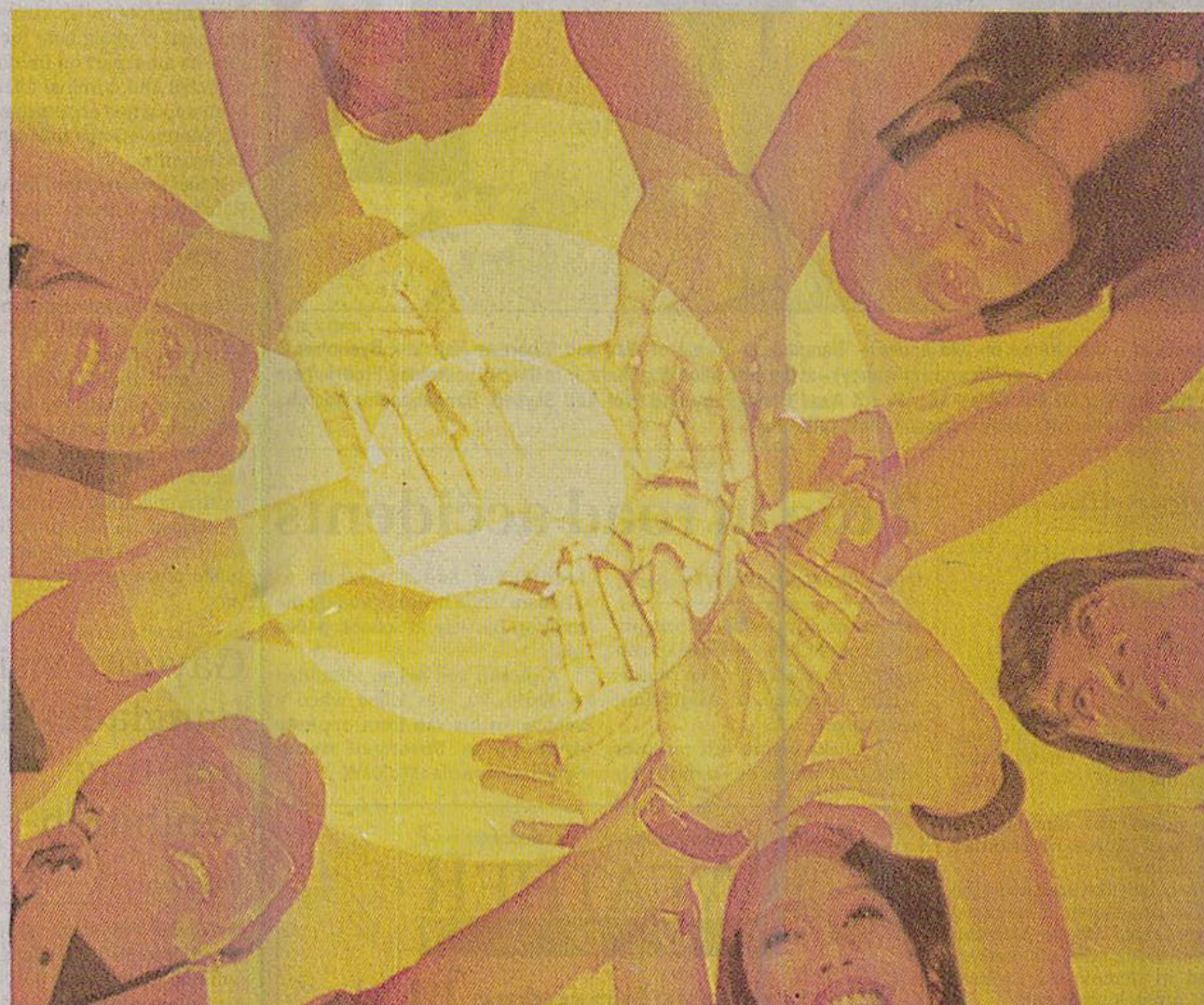
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Talking to reporters about the main WB conditions for releasing the DSC-4, Wallich said the bank is worried about the huge losses Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) is incurring and has re-emphasised the need for raising fuel prices, at least to the Indian price level.

"On the part of the WB we are going to focus on all the DSC issues. The main concerns include the losses of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation. BPC losses are causing liquidity crisis in the banks. Sonali Bank has no liquidity because it is lending ... to finance BPC losses," Wallich said.

"Bangladesh is borrowing expensive foreign credits for importing petroleum products. Since prices are lower in Bangladesh than in India, petroleum products, especially kerosene, are being smuggled into India. So there is a real priority of raising petroleum prices, especially of diesel, so that prices here are similar to that of India, which will automatically stop smuggling and reduce BPC's losses," she explained.

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