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Biting cold grips country

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thick layers of clouds shrouded most parts of the country's skies as cold winds coupled with drizzles yesterday wrought misery in people's lives across the country, especially in the northern region.

Though a pale winter sun peeped through the clouds for some moments, many people chose to remain indoors to avoid the chilly weather. Outbreaks of cold diseases continued to spread pushing further up the number of patients at hospitals and clinics in the capital as well as other places.

The weathermen said the situation would improve today only to welcome first cold wave in this season.

"It happened due to conjugation of easterly trough and westerly low. A mild cold wave may occur when this situation is over," Samarendra Karmakar, the director of the met office, said.

The lowest temperature in the country was recorded at 8.7 degrees Celsius in Srimangal.

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EXPERTS TELL HC ON HASINA EXTORTION CASE Emergency rule not applicable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six legal experts appointed as amicus curiae in the hearing of the extortion case against Sheikh Hasina, submitted their opinions to the High Court (HC) yesterday saying a trial of a crime, which had been committed before the promulgation of the Emergency Power Act, cannot be held under the ambit of Emergency Power Rules (EPR).

It would be a violation of the constitution if a crime committed before the formulation of EPR is brought under the ambit of it, said the six senior Supreme Court (SC) lawyers.

An HC bench on Monday appointed seven senior Supreme Court lawyers as amicus curiae (friends of the court) to assist the



court voluntarily on points of law during the ongoing hearing of the rule issued following a writ filed by Hasina challenging bringing of the extortion case under the ambit of EPR.

All but one lawyer yesterday submitted their opinions to an HC bench. They opined that only a crime committed during the state of emergency could be tried under EPR.

One of the seven, former attorney general Mahmudul Hasan, earlier declined to work as an amicus curiae.

The six amicus curiae who submitted their opinions are TH Khan, Mahbubur Rahman, Rafiqul Islam Mia, Mahbubey Alam, Monsurul Huq Chowdhury, and Abdur Rab Chowdhury.

Abdur Rab Chowdhury gave his submission first, when the hearing on the rule began yesterday. TH Khan who was the last to give his opinion could not finish it and is scheduled to continue today.

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Deposition shows case non-existent Says Canadian jurist

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Canadian jurist and McGill University professor Payam Akhavan yesterday said deposition of the complainant of Tk 2.99 crore extortion case against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina showed the case is 'non-existent'.

"To continue with the case anymore would be a miscarriage of justice," said Payam, who is now in Dhaka, and heard deposition of the complainant in court.

Talking to newsmen after coming out of the court, Payam said, "The ongoing trial is not trial of Sheikh Hasina but trial of the integrity of judicial process."

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Azam identifies Selim as only accused

He does not mention Hasina's name

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK and EMRAN HOSSAIN

Businessman Azam J Chowdhury, who sued former premier Sheikh Hasina for extorting Tk 2.99 crore, ultimately did not bring any allegation against her when the trial of the case began yesterday with his deposition.

Hasina's name appeared only twice in the deposition as Azam quoted his conversations with Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, the former premier's cousin and another accused in the case, while striking the extortion deal.

Azam told the court that Selim assured him of awarding the job of erecting the 210MW power plant at Siddhirganj with the help of "the then prime minister". Azam quoted Selim as saying that if the money is not given to the prime



minister besides him, the work would be stopped. Despite prosecution lawyers' insistence, Azam did not mention the name of the Awami League

chief as an accused. He told the court that he only knows Selim, who was standing on the opposite docket with Hasina, as an accused in relation to the case.

Earlier on the day of framing charge, Hasina told the court that she does not even know Azam J Chowdhury.

On January 24, Azam told the media that he did not file the extortion case against Hasina. This gave rise to speculations about what would be Azam's deposition when the trial begins.

Guarded by police, Azam appeared in the Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court after Hasina arrived in the courtroom at 10:00am.

Both Hasina and Selim stared at Azam, who during his two-hour-long deposition avoided eye

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Detention of Tarique, Hannan Shah illegal

Declares HC

UNB, Dhaka

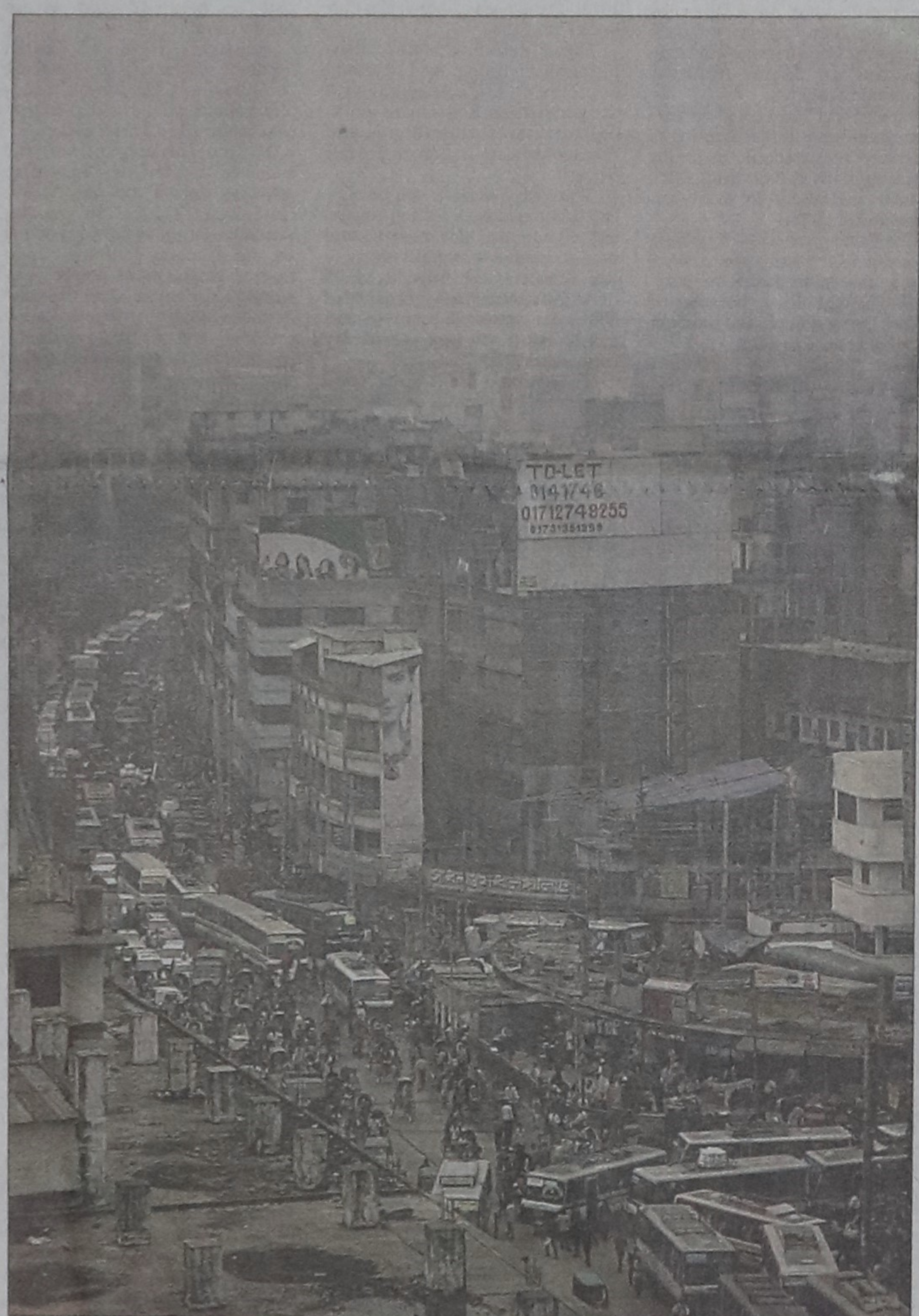
The High Court yesterday declared illegal the detention of Tarique Rahman, senior joint secretary general of the BNP, and Brig Gen (ret) ASM Hannan Shah, adviser to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

The High Court delivered the judgments after hearing two separate writs of habeas corpus that challenged the validity of the detention orders.

The division bench of Justice Mirza Hussain Haider and Justice Mamnoon Rahman also asked the government to release Tarique and Hannan immediately, provided that they are not wanted by police in any other criminal cases.

The court in its judgments said the grounds on which the two BNP men were detained are vague and

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Dhaka's sky remained shrouded by a thick layer of fog yesterday with the city dwellers feeling the bite of cold. The photo was taken from Gulistan area.

PHOTO: STAR

BIRD FLU SOURCE Dhaka trashes Indian media claim

UNB, Dhaka

The government has brushed aside claims in Indian media that Bangladesh is the source of avian influenza that has ravaged poultry farms in West Bengal, saying the flu might have spread in the neighbouring country in other ways.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday said, "The ministry would like to clarify that the outbreak of bird flu was officially reported by India as early as in 2006. This is the fourth recurrence of such an outbreak in India. The cases in Bangladesh, on the other hand, are sporadic in nature, and due to intensive surveillance, the situation has remained under control."

It said, "The question of avian flu virus spreading from

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Mohiuddin, Mir Nasir shifted to Dhaka jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong City Corporation Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury and former state minister Mir Md Nasir Uddin were sent to Dhaka Central Jail from Chittagong jail Tuesday morning.

The decision to shift them was taken on Monday night after the two arch political rivals indicated unity between them at a Chittagong court earlier on the day, sources said.

Awami League (AL) leader Mohiuddin and BNP leader Mir Nasir were produced before Chittagong Divisional special judge's court for hearing of a graft case against the mayor and a tax evasion case against the former state minister.

They were together while being brought to the court from Chittagong jail in the same prison van and appeared before the court at the same time.

While coming out of the courtroom, the two rival leaders waved

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

ILL-GOTTEN WEALTH Ex-power secy ANH Akhter jailed for 10yrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court yesterday sentenced former power secretary ANH Akhter Hossain to ten years imprisonment for amassing wealth beyond known sources of his income and concealing wealth information.

Delivering the judgment, the court fined him Tk 1 lakh, in default he is to suffer for another three months in jail.

Besides, the court sentenced Akhter's wife Nazneen Banu, who is now absconding, to three years imprisonment for abetting her husband in amassing the illegal wealth. Nazneen was fined Tk 50,000, in default she will have to serve jail term for three more months.

The court also ordered confiscation of the illegally acquired property of Akhter Hossain.

Judge AK Roy of Special Court-2 on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban

premises awarded three years imprisonment to Akhter for concealing wealth statement and seven years for accumulating illegal wealth.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Assistant Director Mahbubul Alam filed the graft case against ANH Akhter Hossain and his wife Nazneen Banu with Uttara Police Station on May 31.

According to case, Akhter obtained wealth worth Tk 2.23 crore illegally by abusing power and concealed information about Tk 80 lakh in a statement submitted to the ACC earlier.

Akhter was arrested in February on the premises of the ACC office where he went to submit his wealth report. His name was also on the first list of 50 corruption suspects published by the ACC on February 18, asking them to submit statements of their moveable and immovable assets by 72 hours.

Bribery charges pressed against ex-chairman of BRTC Taimur

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday pressed charges against detained former Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) chairman Advocate Taimur Alam Khondaker in two bribery cases filed with Paltan Police Station.

ACC Assistant Director Shafiqul Haq Siddiqui, also the investigation officer of the cases, submitted the charge sheets against the accused to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, showing 14 people in each of the two cases as prosecution witnesses.

On August 14 last year, ACC Deputy Director Golam Mostafa filed the cases against the former BRTC boss under section 161 of Bangladesh Penal Code and under section 5(2) of the Corruption Resistance Act 1947.

According to the first case, Taimur made a deal with SR

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EU delegation chief for lifting emergency at earliest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dr Stefan Frowein, head of delegation of the European Commission to Bangladesh, yesterday advocated lifting the state of emergency as soon as possible, saying that no donor like to see it in effect.

He underscored the need for a dialogue between the government and the political parties. "It [dialogue] is necessary, it should be," Dr Stefan told reporters after a meeting with Education and Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman at his office.

"Nobody, no donor in the world likes to see emergency situation. We hope this will be over sooner or later," he said.

Dr Stefan hoped that the chief adviser (CA) would be true to his

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Banks asked to provide account details of Tofail, family

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) on Monday asked all the banks to provide it with account information of Awami League Presidium Member Tofail Ahmed and his family members.

The NBR also asked the banks to freeze accounts of 22 people including Jubok Chairman Abu Md Sayed and Manzurul Islam of Islam Group and provide it with their account information.

The Central Intelligence Cell (CIC) of the NBR issued the letter under the Income Tax Ordinance, 1984 asking the banks to give it banking information about Tofail and his five family members within next seven days, bank sources said.

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GP faces licence cancellation threat

BTRC accuses it of violating terms of agreement, gives 30 days to the mobile leader to defend itself

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) yesterday sought explanation from the country's largest telecom company Grameenphone (GP) as to why its license should not be cancelled or suspended on charges of violating the terms of its license agreement.

According to the telecom watchdog show cause notice, Grameenphone will have to respond within the next 30 days, otherwise BTRC might cancel or suspend the leading telecom operator's activities.

BTRC Chairman Maj Gen (ret) Manzurul Alam confirmed the issuance of the notice.

Talking to The Daily Star a GP spokesperson said, "Yes, we have received the notice. We are fully cooperating with the authority in this regard. We will also respond accordingly."

The telecom watchdog issued the notice following a recent revelation by it of GP's involvement in illegal VoIP (voice over internet protocol) operation and illegal international call termination.

BTRC filed a case against 10 former and in service high officials

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POOR ADP IMPLEMENTATION Less active ministries asked to return funds

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

In the backdrop of poor implementation of the Annual Development Programme (ADP), the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecnec) yesterday asked the low-performing ministries to surrender their funds to the planning ministry by February 7.

The Ecnec expressed dissatisfaction over only 21 percent implementation of the ADP in the first six months of the current fiscal year. It also directed the ministries to complete the tendering process for procurement before approval of the authorities concerned, a planning ministry official said.

The Implementation,

Monitoring and Evaluation Department (IMED) of the planning ministry will issue a circular soon allowing the ministries to complete tendering process before approval.

The ministries that fail to implement the allocated money should inform the matter to the planning ministry, which will divert the money to other ministries in the revised budget in February, sources said.

The directions came at the Ecnec meeting at the planning ministry chaired by Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed. He also directed the authorities concerned to prepare work schedules for completing the projects in time.

Submarine cable snapped in Egypt

Telecoms, internet disrupted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

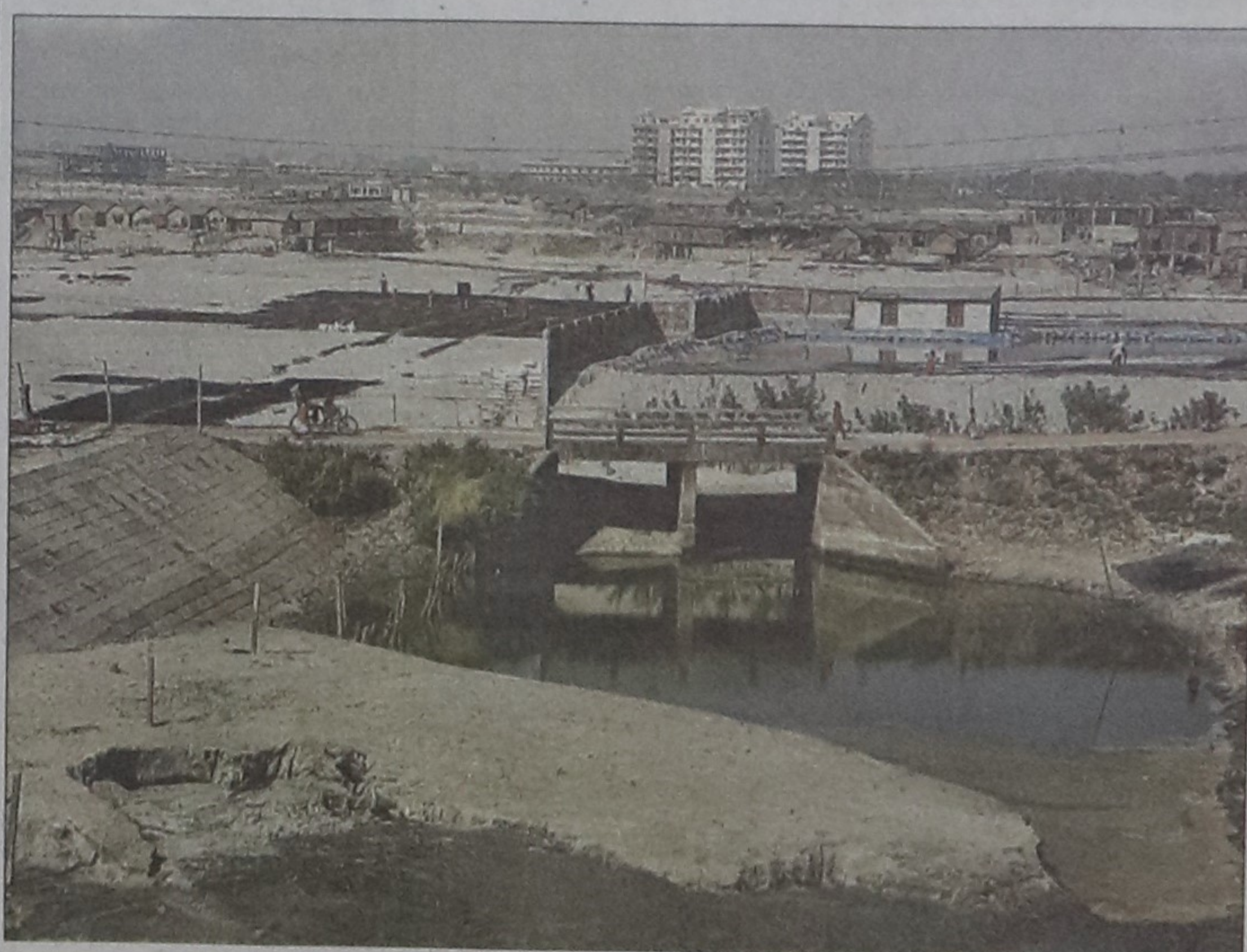
The country's international telephone and internet communications were disrupted yesterday as the submarine cable that connects Bangladesh to the information superhighway was snapped in the sea near Alexandria, Egypt.

Sources in Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (TTB) said the Submarine Cable SEA-ME-WE4 was snapped in Alexandria, disrupting the country's digital communications to the western world via Italy and France.

However, communications with Singapore and Malaysia were fully operational.

The submarine cable connects Bangladesh to the information superhighway at four points in

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Filling up of natural canals in the city continues ignoring its impact on the environment. Developers filled up part of this canal at Jhauchar near Rayerbazar in the capital.

PHOTO: STAR

RMG UNREST Provocation of foreign body, labour leaders found in probe

UNB, Dhaka

Law enforcement agencies have confirmed that a foreign organisation and leaders of a section of garment workers were involved in provoking the recent unrest in garment factories in the city's Mirpur area.

After investigation, an intelligence agency arrested Mehedi Hasan, Bangladesh representative of the Washington-based Workers Rights Consortium (WRC), at the Zia International Airport prior to his departure for Bangkok on January 24.

Mehedi was handed over to Pallabi Police Station in connection with a case filed with it following the workers' unrest.

Six more cases were filed with

Kafrul PS. The police produced Mehedi before the Chief Metropolitan

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