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JS sitting resumes today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Parliament resumes sitting today after a four-day recess.

The main opposition lawmakers still mull over joining the House ending an eight-month boycott of parliament.

"The BNP Parliamentary Party is likely to sit this week to decide on returning to the House," Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abidin Farroque told The Daily Star yesterday over the phone.

Speaker Abdul Hamid on Thursday adjourned the fourth session of parliament sitting till 3:00pm today.

Lawmakers from BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and Bangladesh Jatiya Party have been boycotting the House proceedings since the second session in June last year.

Opposition leaders have recently talked about joining the House to protest against "the wrongdoings of the government."

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Businesses to stay shut alternately

Govt to enforce holidays immediately in 7 city zones to ease traffic jam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In another move to ease traffic congestion in Dhaka, the government yesterday divided the capital into seven zones and fixed separate weekly holidays for shops, shopping arcades and other commercial establishments.

The decision, made at a regular cabinet meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair, will be in force immediately.

Earlier, the government set fresh timings for the city's schools and private offices in an attempt to reduce congestion.

After the meeting at the Cabinet Division of the Secretariat, Prime Minister's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad told reporters that the government had taken up various initiatives to ease congestion in the city. "Dividing the city into zones is part of that," he added.

ZONE-1

Shops, markets and commercial establishments of this zone will remain closed for the entire day on

Friday and half a day on Saturday.

The zone covers Banglabazar, Patuati, Farashganj, Shyambazar, Jurain, Postagola, Shyampur, Dholai, Gendaria, Doyaganj, Dholaikhal, Mir Hazirbagh, Tipu Sultan Road, Dhupkhola, Wari, Ahsan Manjil, Lalbagh, Kotwali, Bangshal, Nawabpur, Chankarpur, southern part of Gulistan, Joy Kali Temple area and south-western side of Jatrabari.

It means the book markets in Banglabazar, the timber markets in Farashganj, the wholesale market for raw-material in Shyambazar, Buriganga Shetu Market, Alam Super Market, Samad Super Market, Rahmania Super Market, Idris Super Market, Doyaganj Bazar, Dhupkhola Math Bazar, Chokbazar, Babu Bazar, Naya Bazar, Kaptan Bazar, Thathari Bazar, Rajdhani Super Market, Doyaganj City Corporation Market, the cloth stores in Islampur, Patuati Electronic and Optical markets, Chhoto Katra and Baro Katra wholesale markets, Sharif Mansion, the electronics and machinery markets in Tanti Bazar and Nawabpur Road, sanitary product shops on North

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



PM unhappy at no result in traffic plan

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed disappointment over the failure of the authorities concerned in easing the city's traffic congestion despite repeated instructions over the last one year.

Presiding over the regular cabinet meeting at the Secretariat, she said she had been repeatedly asking the home and communications ministries and other bodies concerned to take measures and work in coordination to ease traffic jam.

"But she was very unhappy as there was no progress in this regard. The prime minister held the home and communications ministries responsible for this," said a cabinet minister.

Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain, however, tried to defend himself blaming the increasing number of vehicles.

Refuting the excuse, SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

College admission in a shambles

BCL men desperate for 'political quota', make a mint out of admission

WASIM BIN HABIB and NAJMUL ALAM NOBIN

A section of Bangladesh Chhatra League leaders are doing trade over college admissions by forcing the authorities to get candidates of their choice enrolled.

Many leaders of BCL, student body associated with the ruling Awami League, have already taken huge sums from admission seekers, promising them enrolment, said college sources.

Lately, the authorities of several colleges in the capital and outside had to stop the admission process for rowdy demonstrations by Chhatra League activists incensed at not getting their so-called political quota.

BCL men would not let the admission to honour first year under National University go on unless the authorities agree to take in their candidates, added the sources.

In pursuing their interests, they are

violating admission rules at will.

The admission process at Dhaka College has remained stalled for last three days with the ruling party's student leaders holding tenaciously to their demand for "special quota".

In many educational institutions, academic activities have been disrupted due to fights between BCL factions seeking to establish dominance on the campuses to edge ahead in admission trade.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

JMB men kill ex-operative

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Assailants, allegedly of Jama'at ul Mujahideen Bangladesh, stabbed a suspected ex-JMB operative to death in the city's Uttara yesterday.

Victim Rashidul Islam of Panchagarh used to live with his wife in Uttar Khan. A third-year student at Darul Ihsan University, Uttara campus, he turned himself away from JMB about a year ago.

Police said Rashidul was convicted for a jail term in a case filed with Joypurhat Police Station in connection with the August 17, 2005 serial bomb blasts across the country.

Victim's wife Alif Nur said SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Mugging spree in city

3 shot, Tk 18 lakh snatched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least three people lost around Tk 18 lakh and received bullets in separate incidents of mugging yesterday in the capital.

The victims were Farid Khan, a trader and a resident of Noapara village in Munshiganj, Al Amin, a representative of Banglalink, and Selim Sarder, an accounts officer of Sourav Chemical in Mirpur.

BANGLABAZAR
Farid's nephew Shuvo said some six to seven armed snatchers attacked Farid at Banglabazar intersection on his way to Sadarghat branch of Islami Bank around 3:30pm. They shot him in the right leg and took away Tk 12 lakh from his possession.

The snatchers left the scene, pointing firearms at the locals who rushed to the spot hearing the gunshot.

Locals took Farid to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH). Later, he was shifted to a Jatrabari clinic.

Police said they visited the victim at DMCH and were trying to nab the muggers.

Farid runs a business centre on Simpson Road in old part of the city. He exports fruits, ginger and other vegetables.

SHYAMPUR
Al Amin came under attack by a band of armed muggers on his way to Jatrabari branch of One Bank to deposit his money around 1:30pm, said Sarwar Morshed, distribution partner of Banglalink Dholaiapar office.

Sarwar added around seven snatchers riding three motorbikes halted Amin's rickshaw at Jurain rail crossing and tried to snatch his bag with Tk 3.40 lakh. When resisted, the SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

5TH AMENDMENT SC orders on appeal plea today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court (SC) will order today on the leave to appeal petitions challenging the High Court (HC) verdict that had declared illegal and unconstitutional the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution.

The amendment legitimised all the governments that had been in power following the coup of August 15, 1975 till April 9, 1979 including late president Ziaur Rahman's ascension to the presidency.

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain and three SC lawyers Tajul Islam, Kamruzzaman Bhuiyan and Munshi Ahsan Kabir filed two separate leave to appeal petitions with the SC against the HC verdict on May 25 last year.

Though they were not originally parties of the case, the BNP leader and three others filed the petitions SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

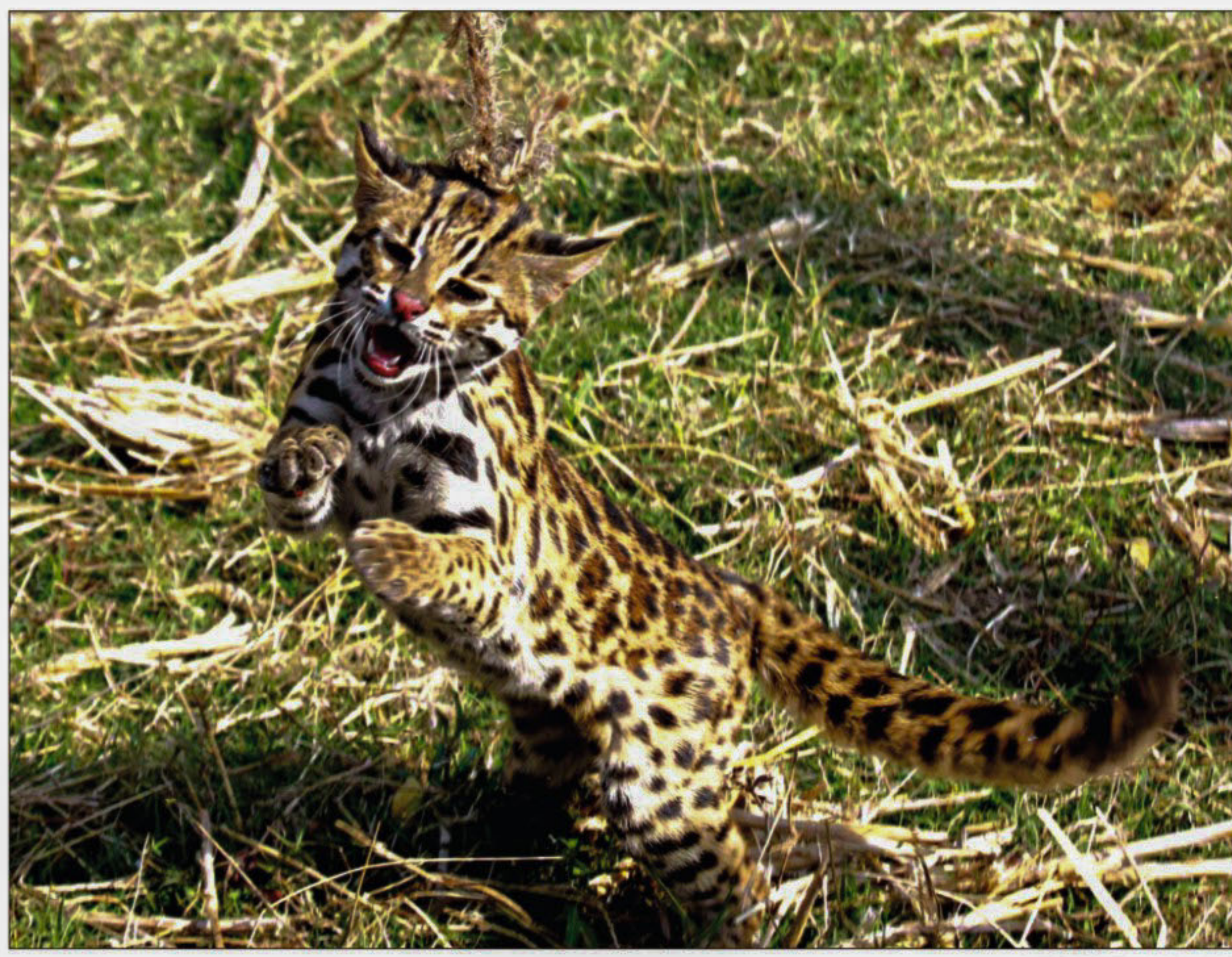


PHOTO: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

A fishing cat caught by the locals of Boro Dighi in the port city's Hathazari area yesterday; later handed over to the Forest Department.

Tiger number riddle

Experts doubt minister's increase forecast

PINAKI ROY

Despite frequent natural calamities, worsening environment and growing salinity in the Sundarbans, the number of Bengal tigers has risen, observes the state minister for forest and environment.

Hasan Mahmud, the minister, made the observation last week, citing the ongoing track monitoring survey by the forest department and Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh.

He was speaking at the launch of the country's first Tiger Action Plan on January 25.

The latest survey finds the number of big cats ranging between 400 and 450.

Censuses in 35 years till 2009 put it between 350 and 450, while in last nine years at least 29 tigers were killed by villagers.

Noted tiger experts do not agree with the state minister as they say disturbances in the mangrove forest have only increased in recent years.

"I don't see any reason the number of tigers should rise. Maybe that remains stable," said tiger expert Dr Manirul H Khan of Jahangirnagar University.

Most of the surveys conducted so far were unscientific and the numbers they gave of tigers were mere estimates, he continued.

"Not all parts of the forest are evenly claimed by the cats as their territory. So monitoring

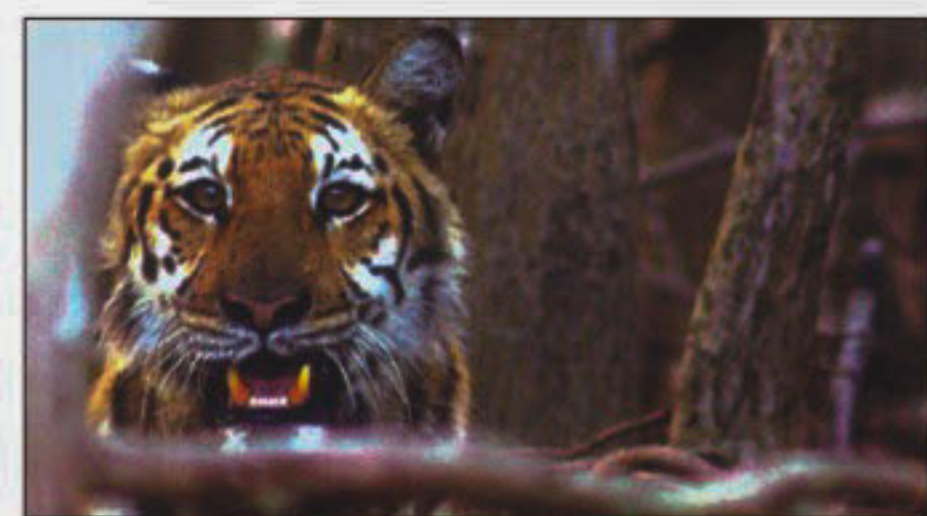


PHOTO COURTESY: MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FOREST

tracks or counting pugmarks cannot give the exact number."

Instead, adds Manirul, the camera census could bring out the exact number.

"I think the number is less than 400 and has not increased recently," said Dr Manirul.

The last pugmark survey by the forest department and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2004 estimated the number to be around 440 including 21 cubs.

Dr Manirul thinks the UNDP survey overestimated the tiger populace.

Earlier in 1975, Buber Hendricks conducted a field survey in compartments 3-6, 29-31, and 46-50. He estimated the tiger count at 350.

In 1982, Margaret Salter conducted a sample and field survey and estimated the number of tigers was 425.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

WAR HEROES' CHILDREN HC rule on govt to keep 30pc quota

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued a rule upon the government to explain within three weeks why it should not be directed to preserve 30 per cent quota in the posts of health assistants for the children of freedom fighters.

The HC bench of Justice AHM Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik and Justice Borhan Uddin issued the rule upon a writ petition filed by Tyebur Rahman, a freedom fighter. SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Govt now shifts focus to war crimes trial

Formal investigation starts next month

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Having completed the execution of five killers of Bangabandhu, the government is now making preparations to start the process for the long awaited trial of the war criminals of 1971.

The government is planning to start formal investigation against war criminals early March. The tribunal and other relevant offices for the trial will be completed within this month. Sources said the government is collect-

ing documents and evidence of the offences committed during the nine-month Liberation War of the republic in 1971.

A few pro-Liberation War organisations including Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee and Sector Commanders Forum will provide documents and evidence to the government, which itself has some documents and evidence, sources said.

During the Liberation War, Pakistani occupation forces and their Bangladeshi collaborators killed three million people,

violated a quarter million women, and eliminated the best Bangalee brains on December 14, 1971.

Leaders of these collaborating groups--Razakar, Al-Badr and Al-Shams--who are still alive, will be brought to trial in the first phase, according to the sources.

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed told The Daily Star on January 30 that investigators and prosecutors will be appointed after setting up the tribunal and other offices at the Old High Court building. SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Mother, 4 kids die in Ctg fire

3 houses gutted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A woman and her four children were burnt to death in a fire at their house in Hathazari upazila in Chittagong on Sunday night.

Two other adjacent houses were also gutted in the fire, locals said.

The victims were identified as Raju Akter, 35, wife of Babul, her seven-month-old son Sakibul Islam, Shariful Islam, 3, Sathi Moni, 5, and Saiful Islam, 10. Babul was not at home during the accident. The victims were asleep when the fire broke out.

Police and witnesses said the fire originated from an earthen oven at Babul's house at Katakhalipool around 11:30pm. After two hours, fire-fighters of Hathazari fire station extinguished the fire.

16 children rescued from 'trafficker' in Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Police rescued 16 indigenous children from a hotel and arrested a man on charges of child trafficking from Bandarban town yesterday morning.

Acting on a tip-off, sadar police raided Habib Boarding in the morning and found them, said Sub-Inspector Mirza Mohammad Hasan.

Police later arrested the alleged trafficker, Mohon SEE PAGE 15 COL 10