



PHOTO: STAR

Slabs of the Rajshahi city protection embankment slide down to the Padma river that has swollen 7cm above the danger level threatening the dam. Floodwater entered the city through sluice gates and sewerage lines connected with the river.

40 filling stations to face music for not going CNG-proper

RAFIQ HASAN

The government will soon take legal action against 40 filling stations in the city, which are yet to install compressed natural gas (CNG) machines.

It will not renew the leases on land with the defaulting filling stations, sources in the communications ministry told The Daily Star.

Besides, the energy ministry has been asked to take stern action against the petrol pumps that will default on setting up CNG machines by the six-month deadline since April. Only eight of the city's 48 filling stations set up such machines.

A high official at the communications ministry said there would have been hardly any CNG crisis, if all filling stations had installed CNG machines.

A filling station can install a CNG

machine at a cost of up to Tk 2.25 crore and most stations have adequate land for installation.

The communications ministry allocated land for 98 new CNG filling stations to be set up across the country: 49 in Dhaka metropolitan area, 34 in its suburbs like Savar, Tongi and Demra and 15 in Chittagong metropolitan area.

Of the stations that were given six months' time for launch, only 21 went into operation in Dhaka and one in Chittagong.

The ministry decided to cancel land allocations of the defaulters, but no allocations, leased for 15 years and to be renewed every five years, were cancelled, said sources.

Some allottees, however, are facing opposition from different circles because of land dispute, the sources said.

The rent of the land has been fixed

at Tk 15,000 for Dhaka division and Tk 10,000 for Chittagong division a month.

Around 18,000 vehicles run on CNG in Bangladesh. As much as Tk 2,200 crore could be saved a year, if all vehicles run on CNG, said a source.

The government relaxed the rules to popularise the use of CNG and reduced the mandatory deposit for installation to Tk 10 lakh for Dhaka division and Tk 5 lakh for Chittagong division from Tk 25 lakh. But a high official claimed the mandatory deposit was reduced following low response from entrepreneurs to setting up CNG filling stations.

The government is also thinking of taking action against those who installed CNG machines without approval and are creating traffic jam by setting them up blocking roads.

Swedes say 'no' to euro

AFP, Stockholm

Swedish Prime Minister Goeran Persson faced yesterday the daunting task of healing deep divisions in his country after Swedes rejected the euro in a referendum seen as a slap in the face of Europe.

The Swedish vote was a crushing blow to Persson, an ardent euro supporter who had put his full weight behind the "yes" campaign, and a snub to the European Union which the Scandinavian country joined eight years ago.

Sweden, the first country to vote on the euro since the single currency went into circulation in 12 of the EU's 15 member states in January 2002, rejected the euro by a 14 percent margin, with 56.1 percent of Swedes voting in favour and 41.8 percent against.

The referendum campaign had been characterised by bitter rhetoric from both sides, with fierce opposition to the euro within the left-wing of Persson's own Social Democratic Party, which accused him of betraying the party's grassroots base by teaming up with big business to promote the single currency.

But the EU's executive arm, the European Commission, said in a statement that it was up to Persson to tackle the aftermath of the euro

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Death threat made to 4 top BNP leaders in Khulna

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

Four top leaders of the city BNP including Mayor Shaikh Tayebur Rahman and lawmaker Ali Asgar Lobi received death threats on Sunday.

They will be murdered any time within two months, anonymous letters sent to them said.

The typed letters were sent to Tayebur, Lobi, city BNP Vice-president Sekander Zafulah Khan Shachchu and Shaharuzzaman Martuza by post on Saturday from Khulna City Post Office.

A decision to murder them was made unanimously at a secret meeting held at a house in Ward No. 25 of the city corporation in Sonadanga thana recently. The meeting was attended by some cadres of the BNP,

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67 die in Riyadh prison blaze

AFP, Riyadh

Sixty-seven inmates died and 20 others were injured yesterday in a fire at Saudi Arabia's biggest prison, where three members of the security forces were also hurt, the prison service chief announced.

The blaze in the jail in Riyadh "resulted in 67 inmates dead, as well as 20 inmates and three security men wounded," the official SPA news agency quoted the prison chief as saying, without naming him.

He said a committee set up by

Interior Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz was investigating the cause of the fire.

A security source told the news agency shortly earlier that the fire at Al-Hair jail on the southern edge of the Saudi capital was still burning and rescue operations were ongoing.

"A fire started Monday afternoon at a detention centre in Riyadh causing a certain number of deaths among the prisoners," the director-general of the prison service told SPA in an initial account of the incident.

Firemen and emergency work-

ers "intervened immediately", the director-general said, adding that Prince Nayef had ordered an inquiry into the "causes and consequences" of the fire.

The official statements gave no clue as to whether the blaze was the result of an accident or if it had been deliberately started by inmates or people from outside the jail.

Riyadh was the scene of triple suicide attacks against residential compounds on May 12 that left 35 people dead, including several bombers. Authorities have since launched a massive crackdown on suspected terrorists.

BNP refutes hint at bureaucrats' role in putting it in power

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling BNP yesterday brushed aside an opposition lawmaker's allegation that some top government officials played vital roles in bringing the party to power.

Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui, who chaired yesterday's sitting, expunged the allegation from the speech to parliament by Abdul Kader Siddiqui, the lone lawmaker of the Krishak Sramik Janata League.

The allegation came as a reaction to a circular by the education secretary, which banned attaching ministers' and lawmakers' recommendations with promotion and transfer applications, and Siddiqui accused the official of doing favour to the BNP to come to power without

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PHOTO: AFP

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat is greeted by an elderly supporter among hundreds gathered in the grounds of Arafat's partially destroyed compound in the West Bank city of Ramallah yesterday.

US against killing, exile of Arafat

REUTERS, Washington

Secretary of State Colin Powell yesterday rejected a senior Israeli official's suggestion of killing Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and said it would cause the Middle East to erupt in rage.

Although Powell's comments signaled disapproval of potential Israeli action to break Arafat's hold over the Palestinian Authority, they fall short of the personal demand by President

Bush needed to block any Israeli move against Arafat, analysts said.

"The United States does not support either the elimination of him or the exile of Mr. Arafat ... the Israelis know our position quite well," said Powell.

"The consequences would not be good ones. I think you can anticipate that there would be rage throughout the Arab world, the Muslim world and in many

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Sayedee appeals against HC order

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami leader Delwar Hossain Sayedee filed a petition with the Supreme Court yesterday to grant him permission to appeal against Sunday's High Court (HC) Division order that revoked his parliament membership.

Hearing of the petition for leave to appeal might be held before the Appellate Division tomorrow.

The HC Division order had still not reached the Election Commission (EC) yesterday. Once it receives the order, the EC must declare the constituency vacant and hold fresh polls within 90 days.

The HC Division on Sunday stripped Sayedee of his Jatiya Sangsad membership declaring his

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Two caught for thievery at bank

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Clients at a counter of City Bank's Islampur branch yesterday captured two for attempting a thievery.

Abdul Huq and Maiba were caught red-handed when they tried to stash away Tk 2 lakh from a cash counter at about 10:00am, witnesses said.

They lifted four bundles of Tk 500 notes that the cashier failed to notice. Watching them leaving with the bundles, clients raised an alarm. Bank officials searched them and found the money in a bag and both failed to provide any document showing proof of withdrawing the amount, bank officials said.

Bank employees and clients inside the bank gave them a beating before handing over to police.

Safiqul Alam, vice-president of City Bank, filed a case with Kotwali Police Station.



PHOTO: STAR

Traders run business dumping construction materials on the bank of the Turag at Amin Bazar yesterday. The river lost much of its foreshore to ever-increasing encroachment.

HPSP set to be extended again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The five-year Health and Population Sector Programme (HPSP) is likely to be extended for another six months till June 30 next year.

The donor-aided HPSP launched on July 1, 1998 was earlier granted extension up to December 31 this year from June 30.

A senior World Bank (WB) official said, "We are in the process of considering a request for extension if the government agrees to a few terms and conditions and HPSP credit may be extended up to June 2004."

According to sources in the health ministry, the WB and other co-financiers of the HPSP had committed US\$ 70 million for the period July 1 to December 31 this year. Of the amount, \$30 million has

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Found not guilty yet his jail days not over

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A teenage boy continues to languish in the Juvenile Correction Centre at Tongi, Dhaka, even though the court cleared him of charges about 10 months ago.

Md Jamal, 14, of Iswargram under Muktagachha in Mymensingh has been in prison for two years and five months, a press release of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) said yesterday.

Jamal was implicated by Kazi Masud Ahmed of Abhy Das Lane in

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STAR REPORT

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) is likely to propose amendments to the telecoms act for more power to work as an independent regulator, in addition to the amendments sought by intelligence agencies.

The intelligence agencies earlier asked for amendments to the act, allowing them to breach privacy of individuals by tapping phone calls and busting e-mails.

The telecoms watchdog is considering seeking amendments to some clauses of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Act 2001, which stand in its way of acting independently.

For instance, the act stipulates that the commission send a report on its functions to the post and telecommunications minister within 90 days of the expiry of every financial year. The minister then makes arrangements for presentation of the report before parliament.

But no such report has been presented before parliament since the commission came into being in January 2002.

The commission will also seek an amendment to have the commission chairman as chief financial officer (CFO), as the act does not specifically define the role of the chairman in financial matters.

The telecoms regulator is maintaining a high level of secrecy in preparing the amendment draft after a leading intelligence agency backed by other agencies convinced the telecoms ministry to bring some changes to the act, sources said.

Most senior officials of the commission were reluctant to comment on what the proposed amendments would be.

The intelligence agencies also want access to the subscribers' database of all fixed phone and cellular phone service providers and

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Top police officer shot dead in Iraqi town

AFP, Fallujah

The police chief of Khaldiyyah town, Colonel Khdayir Ali Mukhlif, was killed yesterday when three men opened fire at his car in this hotspot city west of Baghdad, a police official here said.

"Around 2:00 pm (1000 GMT) three unknown assailants opened fire on the car in which the police chief was coming back to Khaldiyyah from Fallujah," Lieutenant Colonel Jalal Sabri, in charge of police patrols in Fallujah, said.

He told AFP that two sergeants -- Rabih Kannan and Fuad Fadel -- who were travelling with Mukhlif were seriously wounded after another three men opened fire from a white pick-up truck.

The identity of the three killers was hidden as they had wrapped

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Sept 16		6-01 pm
Sept 17	5-45 am	
Prayer Timings		
September 16		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-45	5-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-10	6-14
Esha	7-45	8-15
Source: Islamic Foundation		