



Workers pave the Dhaka-Narayanganj Highway at Shyampur with bricks although the Roads and Highways Department suggests stone layers for all high-ways.

## ISPs' token strike today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Internet Service Providers Association of Bangladesh will stage a 30-minute symbolic strike since 12:00 noon today to demand immediate legalisation of voice over internet phone (VoIP).

All internet operations will remain snapped during the strike. But necessary online services such as banking, medical transcription and online data entry will remain unaffected by the strike.

The association called on internet users to express solidarity with the protest.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has been pressing the issue since last year and made recommendations to legalise VoIP.

Sources in the industry allege that some influential people mount pressure to delay the legalisation, as they will lose earnings from illegal call terminations through VoIP.

## Toxic gas spews in Sitakunda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Highly toxic gas spewing from a ship-breaking yard polluted a large area at Sitakunda Monday.

Both plants and living beings were badly affected by the gas.

The gas came from Ahmed Mostafa Steel Shipyard at Bhatiyar at around 10:00am when an old ship was being dismantled.

It spread very fast, polluting air in Jahanabad and Kadam Rasul areas. The gas damaged hyacinths and banana trees and forced some 1,000 people to desert their homes for at least six hours.

All classes of a nearby school a n d

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# BNP top bosses irked at failure to form low-tier bodies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP high command is highly annoyed that leaders assigned to complete formation of fresh committees of thana and district units of the party by August failed to do so despite repeated instructions.

Sources said the party leadership had given a deadline to complete formation of 75 organisational district committees by August 31 but only 20 have been formed. Formation of thana committees has also not been complete.

The party leadership sought to complete thana and district commit-

tees within the deadline to facilitate holding of the national council by the end of this year. But the present trend make the fate of the committees look uncertain.

Party insiders said similar deadlines for committee formation were also given earlier but all went unmet as many of the leaders at local and central levels are more busy with their personal gains, ignoring party interest.

Central leaders however alleged that important local level leaders like presidents and general secretaries of thana and district units are unwilling to hand over leadership to

others. So, they are delaying fresh committee formation on various pretexts.

But grassroots level leaders and activists alleged that their top leaders have remained virtually aloof from party activities because they are too much engaged in making their fortune. This has led to frustration among the party rank and file.

To overcome this situation, the party central leadership seeks to bring new leadership at different levels to gear up activities.

Sources said BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan

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# Disputed death toll in Saudi prison fire 184

## Sabotage claim ruled out

AFP, Dubai

A Saudi opposition group said as many as 144 inmates and 40 security men died in a fire Monday at Saudi Arabia's largest prison, more than double the official toll given by authorities.

"According to an unimpeachable security source, 144 inmates have died in the fire at Al-Hair prison, in addition to 32 policemen and eight police officers," London-based

A foreign ministry spokesman yesterday said there is no Bangladeshi among the inmates killed in Monday's Saudi prison blaze, reports BSS.

Saad al-Fagih of the Movement for Islamic Reform, which was first to break news of the blaze, told AFP.

Saudi Arabia's prison chief, quoted by the official SPA news agency, said earlier that the Riyadh

jail blaze "left 67 inmates dead, as well as 20 inmates and three security men wounded."

AFP from Riyadh adds: Investigators yesterday ruled out sabotage as a cause of a blaze at the Saudi prison, where the war against Islamist extremists linked to Al-Qaeda is raging.

The authorities were working on the theory that an accident caused what Al-Watan newspaper descri-

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# Dhaka to urge Seoul to legalise workers

## Vice-minister Jae-sup arrives this morning

RAFIQ HASAN

Dhaka will ask Seoul to increase the workers quota for Bangladeshis and legalise those who are staying in Korea without valid documents during the visit of the South Korean vice minister for foreign affairs and trade.

Vice-minister Kim Jae-sup arrives here this morning on a three-day official visit and will hold talks with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Reaz Rahman and meet State Minister for Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Mohammad Quamrul Islam, according to foreign ministry sources.

Bilateral trade, regional politics and economic issues will also be discussed during the talks. The minister would also attend a regional conference of South Korean diplomats of the South Asia

region in Dhaka.

The Korean minister is scheduled to leave Friday.

Around 30,000 Bangladeshis are now staying in South Korea, of whom 20,000 do not have valid documents, according to official estimates.

Seoul fixed a ceiling of 5,500 Bangladeshi labours for the South Korean job market, but it eventually raised the quota to 8,800 last year. But many Bangladeshis have entered the country illegally and are staying without valid documents.

The South Korean parliament passed an act in August to introduce employment permit system for foreign workers and allow workers staying illegally there to apply for the certificate on employment status and the approval of visa issuance.

Under the law titled Act on Employment of Foreign Workers,



Kim Jae-sup

2.27 lakh illegal foreign workers would be legalised.

Foreign workers who have resided in Korea for less than four years would be given legitimate work permits from September 1 to

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## Hemayetuddin new envoy to India

BSS, Dhaka

The government has appointed Hemayetuddin, presently ambassador to Thailand, as country's next high commissioner to India.

Hemayetuddin joined the Information Service as a member in 1974 and the Foreign Service in 1975, a foreign ministry press release said yesterday.

Prior to his present assignment as ambassador to Thailand, Hemayetuddin had served in Bangladesh Missions in Beijing, Washington DC, Brussels and New Delhi in various capacities.

## French frigate reaches Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A French frigate with Commanding Officer of the Indian Ocean Zone Rear Admiral Willmot Roussel on board arrived at Chittagong Port yesterday on a four-day goodwill trip, official sources said.

The FNS Marne, a 158-metre long vessel with a DWT of 18,000 tons and 164 sailors on board, captained by Commander Herve Robert Marie Boy, anchored at Chittagong Port's outer anchorage.

Sarwar Jahan Nizam, commodore commanding, Chittagong, welcomed the sailors of the frigate, which was escorted by a Bangladesh Navy patrol ship in Bangladesh territory.

The FNS Marne from Chennai Port of India is scheduled to take part in a joint-exercise with Bangladesh Navy before sailing out for Lankwai Port of Malaysia on September 19, official sources said.

During their stay, the sailors of the frigate will attend different functions and visit the naval installations.

The FNS Marne is the 16th frigate arriving in Chittagong Port on a goodwill trip since 1975. The last frigate, another French ship, arrived in January, 2002.

# Schroeder, Chirac, Blair to try to heal Iraq rift

REUTERS, Berlin

Germany, France and Britain agreed yesterday to talks on narrowing their differences over Iraq's future and the role of the United Nations in it.

And in a diplomatic boost to Baghdad's US-installed leaders, OPEC invited Iraq to attend a meeting of the powerful oil producers' group.

France and Germany want a bigger UN role in Iraq and a quicker transfer of power to Iraqis themselves. Matters sure to be discussed next weekend with Britain, the most ardent supporter of the US-led war that deposed Saddam Hussein.

Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder

hosts French President Jacques Chirac and British Prime Minister Tony Blair in Berlin to try to reach agreement on the way forward.

"The meeting serves to agree to common positions in foreign policy after there were divergent opinions in the run-up to the Iraq war," the German government said in a statement.

With forces in Iraq suffering almost daily casualties from guerrilla attacks and costs of the occupation mounting, the United States wants support for a new UN resolution that would keep it in charge but bring in cash and troops from other states.

UN talks in Geneva on Iraq's future last weekend failed to end

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## Rivals kill top Barisal criminal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Shahjahan Gazi, a listed criminal, was murdered yesterday in the city allegedly by his rivals.

Five others were also injured in the attack on Shahjahan.

Shahjahan, 47, was an accused in at least 19 criminal cases including five for murders. He was arrested several times but managed to come out of jail on bail thanks to his political connections, sources said.

According to police, witnesses and the case lodged by Shahana Parvin Renu, wife of Shahjahan, the victim was returning home at Zia Sarak from Kudghata area Tuesday morning by a rickshaw.

Renu, his second wife, was accompanying him when around 50 people ambushed them near the

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## Govt probing Tongi juvenile delinquents' suicide attempt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday formed a one-member committee to probe the reported suicide attempt by eight juvenile delinquents interned at the National Juvenile Correctional Centre (NJCC) at Tongi on Sunday.

Abu Taher, director (institution) of the Social Welfare Directorate will investigate the incident in which at least eight young boys tried to commit suicide to escape alleged torture and irregularities inside the correc

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Sept 17		6-00 pm
Sept 18	5-44 am	
Prayer Timings		
September 17		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	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		

# Youth killed after kidnap; female teacher picked up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A youth was abducted and killed and a female teacher was picked up by a gang apparently for forced marriage with her 'lover' in Fatikchhari Monday.

Sources said a group of criminals, reportedly members of the 'Altaf Bahini', abducted Mohammed Belal, 19, son of Abdul Jabber, from their residence at Telipara of Kanchan Nagar union at around 9:00pm.

Belal was found dead in Bairag under the same upazila the following morning.

Police Sunday recovered illegal arms from the hideout of the Altaf Bahini, supported by Kashem Chairman, prime suspect of the

abduction of magnate Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury.

Sources believe Altaf might have provided police with information, which led the seizure of the arms and angered the Altaf gang.

The victim's father filed a case with Fatikchhari Police Station.

Meanwhile, Jilu Akter, 25, daughter of Md Solaiman and a teacher of Dakkhin Rangamatia Satellite School, was picked up by miscreants Monday night.

Police and witnesses said eight miscreants on board a microbus came to Jilu's residence at Noapara of Rangamatia union at around 7:30pm. They entered the house a n d

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PHOTO: STAR

ADVERSE ADVERTS: A billboard stands high in front of the CIRDAP building in Dhaka, adding to vision pollution created by illegal hoarding and hundreds of mega-signs.