



Saifur's wife dies

UNB, Dhaka

Durre Samad Rahman, wife of Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman, died at their Gulshan residence yesterday evening at 63.

She was suffering from cancer, her family sources said.

She left behind three sons, a daughter, grandchildren and a host of relatives and well-wishers. Her family members were present at her bedside when she died.

The first namaz-e-janaza of Durre Samad Rahman will be held at 10:30am at Gulshan Azad Mosque. A second janaza will be held at Mazar Mosque of Hazrat Shahjalal (R) in

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Nurses under treatment asked to vacate cabins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday asked nurses injured in last week's police clubbing to leave the cabins they are staying in for treatment.

A notice signed by DMCH Director Nazmul Huda also asked the agitating diploma student nurses to attend their classes and duties.

"It is an inhumane decision," said Nasima, an agitating third-year diploma student nurse last night. "You cannot force the injured out of the hospital."

"The authorities are trying to

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Bangladesh fares low on RSF press freedom rating

AFP, Paris

Bangladesh ranked 143rd on a list of 166 nations in press freedom status published yesterday by Paris-based group Reporters without Borders (RSF) that singled out Asia for its catastrophic record.

The report, rating some states by their behaviour both at home and in areas under occupation, also pointed finger at the United States and Israel over their treatment of journalists in occupied territories.

The RSF report ranked the US-led occupation authorities in Iraq at 135 out of 166, well below the rank

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Table with Sun Rises and Sun Sets for Oct 21 and Oct 22.

Prayer Timings for October 21, including Azan and Jamaat times for Fajr, Zohr, Asr, Maghrib, and Esha.

US has no plan to invade N Korea

Bush offers security guarantee to Pyongyang if it shuns nukes

ANN/ THE KOREA HERALD, Bangkok

President George W Bush said yesterday that the United States had no intention of invading North Korea and might give Pyongyang security assurances to end its nuclear weapons programme.

North Korea has set a non-

aggression pact as a condition for abandoning its suspected nuclear weapons programme.

Bush, however, ruled out such a treaty and instead said Washington could provide written multilateral assurances if Pyongyang declares itself nuclear-free.

The surprising remarks came at

a summit between Thai President Roh Moo-hyun and Bush held on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) forum that opened Monday in Bangkok.

"President Bush explained how security assurances might be pro

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Prime Minister Khaleda Zia goes round stalls in Bangladesh Apparel and Textile Exposition after opening the three-day event at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka yesterday.

Prices of essentials spiral out of control

TAWFIQUE ALI

With the advent of Ramadan, the price of essentials has once again spiralled out of control.

Over the past two weeks, prices have shot up several times reaching beyond the purchasing power of many commoners.

The soaring price of vegetables is the most conspicuous. The other conspicuous thing is the absence of any kind of government intervention to put a lid on prices that in some cases have increased two to three fold.

"This is a very difficult time for the general consumers with limited income who constitute the bulk of the population," said Abdul Baset, a shopper trying his luck at Karwan Bazar kitchen market.

During a recent inspection of the city's kitchen markets, this correspondent found common food items put up for sale at exorbitant prices.

Per kg bitter gourd sold at Tk 28-32 up from Tk 12, cucumbers Tk 28 from Tk 10-12, brinjal Tk 28 from Tk 18, and barbati (long bean) Tk 24 from Tk 16.

The price of lady's finger rose from Tk 8-10 to Tk 20 per kg while tomatoes were selling at Tk 36-40

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Work on maiden tech-park begins

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Work on the Tk 251 crore Bangladesh's first technology park has started with the Gazipur district administration's initiation of a process to hand over 264 acres of land to the science, information and communication technology (ICT) ministry.

Industries including electronics, hardware and software, bio-informatics, agro-biotechnology, genetic engineering, IT servicing, pharmaceutical and plastic will be established in the park.

The ICT ministry is trying to woo foreign investment for the project.

A report of the ICT ministry to the parliamentary standing committee on the ministry Tuesday said 140 more acres could be provided if necessary to extend the park.

The ministry is trying to invite hi-tech companies across the world through the Economic Relation Department to invest in the park.

Software giant Oracle has already expressed interest to send a delegation to Bangladesh, Moeen Khan, minister for science and ICT ministry, told The Daily Star.

Citing the example of Malaysia, he said: "We can also change our economy through this sector like Kuala Lumpur."

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Over 25 states back Dhaka's run for OIC top job

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has obtained formal support from more than 25 Muslim nations for its candidature for the next secretary generalship of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).

Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury said this at a press briefing yesterday. He added Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has conducted a hectic campaign for the post during her recent visit to Kuala Lumpur to attend the 10th OIC summit.

Presidents, prime ministers,

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Israel strikes Gaza thrice, 3 killed

AP, Gaza City

Unleashing three air strikes in less than four hours Monday, Israel killed at least two Hamas members and a bystander and destroyed a suspected rocket factory run by the Islamic militant group.

Twenty-three people, including four children and a 70-year-old woman, were wounded in the first two attacks, Palestinian hospital officials said.

A team of Israeli helicopters then launched a third air strike in the same Gaza City neighborhood Monday.

Smoke was billowing from the scene of the third attack, which came just after noon, according to witnesses.

The strikes came a day after Palestinian militants fired a barrage of homemade rockets into southern Israel from Gaza. Also Sunday, a Palestinian ambush in the West Bank killed three Israeli soldiers and wounded a fourth.

The Hamas members were traveling in a white pickup truck that was hit by two missiles fired by Israeli helicopters. Witnesses said the truck was spotted earlier in the day near the alleged weapons

workshop targeted in the first air strike in the Sajaiya neighborhood of Gaza City.

The pickup had stopped at a traffic light near a gas station, on a busy street crowded with schoolchildren, when the missiles hit the front of the vehicle. A kindergarten and an elementary school had just let out students for the day.

"Schoolchildren were trying to cross the road (at the time)," said bus driver Ahmed Sobeh, who was driving behind the pickup at the time. "I saw a person in the car being evacuated and his body was com

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Moulavibazar gas purchase sales deal signed finally

SHARIER KHAN

Petrobangla and US oil company Unocal finally signed a gas purchase sales agreement (GPSA) yesterday for supply of gas from the Moulavibazar field after tough negotiations spanning over a month.

The agreement will allow the American company to supply 70 million cubic feet of gas per day (mmcf) from early 2005.

"Development of the field will help meet Bangladesh's immediate needs for natural gas supplies," said Andrew L Fawthrop, president and managing director of Unocal Bangladesh Ltd., in a release yesterday.

As per the Petrobangla projection, minimum 35mmcf gas supply from the Moulavibazar field will be

required in 2004 and 60mmcf in 2005 even to cope with the domestic demand growth.

"By 2006 or 2007, the country will also have to rely on Unocal's Bibiyana gas field for domestic consumption," said Petrobangla Acting Chairman SR Osmani.

Unocal and Petrobangla initiated the GPSA on July 9 with an aim to finalise it in September on clearance from the energy and law ministries and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

The PMO took longer than usual to scrutinise the GPSA as the Moulavibazar field bore the legacy of the Magurchhara blowout that destroyed huge gas reserves, sources said.

Magurchhara field, which is also known as Moulavibazar 1 gas field,

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Palestinian youths search the rubble of an uninhabited building missed by Israel in eastern Gaza City yesterday in a raid that wounded 12 Palestinians.

Manpower export set to get new shot in arm

Malaysian, Saudi ministers arrive to sign MoU, hold talks

RAFIQ HASAN

Manpower exports are set to get a shot in the arm as cabinet members of two major importing countries are coming to Dhaka to sign agreements and hold talks on recruitment this week.

Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of Saudi Arabia Ali Bin Ibrahim Al Namla will arrive Thursday on a three-day visit.

On the other hand, Minister for Human Resources of Malaysia Dr Fong Chang Onn arrives tomorrow to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to resume manpower exports to Malaysia, according to sources.

The Saudi minister will call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan.

He will also hold talks with State Minister for Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Mohammad

Quamrul Islam.

"Increasing manpower export will be the main agenda of discussion with the ministers," said a high official at the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment.

Dhaka would also try to convince Riyadh into increasing intake of professionals and skilled and semi-skilled workers. Currently, around 1.30 lakh workers go to Saudi Arabia a year, more than 90 percent of them unskilled.

Around 13 lakh Bangladeshis now work in the kingdom, who send over 60 per cent of the remittance.

Dhaka will also bargain for increasing salary of unskilled workers and improving their working conditions. Most workers get less than 400 rial a month.

On the other hand, following

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