

# Ecneec okays 15 health plans

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecneec) yesterday approved 15 annual operational plans (OPs) under the Health and Population Sector Programme (HPSP).

The approval cleared the way for the health ministry to disburse immediate funds for procurement of a huge amount of drugs from abroad, purchase of medical equipment, construction of health centres and payment of salary to about 80,000 family planning field workers.

The Daily Star on October 15 and 28 ran reports on the delay in okaying the OPs, pointing out that it had already caused immense sufferings to health service recipients as they could not procure drugs and the government's own staff were not getting salary since July this year.

The Ecneec meeting, chaired by Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman, formally approved the OPs which were held up for review by the Planning Commission since August this year.

As a result of fund shortage, no activities in the health sector could be carried out, like purchase of drugs

and equipment.

According to sources, the meeting approved an additional Tk 101.23 crore from the government exchequer for the current fiscal year which has to be utilised by December.

Earlier, the health ministry had disbursed Tk 11.84 crore for different health expenditures. The Ecneec also approved Tk 400 crore in addition to Tk 250 crore already sanctioned for the health ministry from the Annual Development Programme (ADP).

The finance minister briefing journalists at the Planning Commission yesterday afternoon said, "All the money approved for the health ministry has to be spent by this December so that the next phase of the health programme can start in time."

The National Steering Committee of the ministry had okayed the 15 OPs in August, seeking Tk 578 crore for essential expenditures in the health sector. But the Planning Commission delayed the approval.

Due to the fund crisis, drug purchase for government hospitals remained suspended since July 1, sources said.

# AL demands judicial probe into Sakil's death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary team of the main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday demanded a judicial inquiry into the death of Shakil Ahmed Chowdhury Sumon in police custody at Khilgaon Police Station.

Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid, Faruk Khan and Abdul Hai went to Sumon's residence at Meradia at 11:15am and talked to the bereaved family and locals.

"Death in police custody from torture due to non-payment of bribe is a serious violation of human rights and the culprits should be punished", Shahid told The Daily Star.

The parents narrated the police excesses and alleged that the officer-in-charge killed Sumon for bribe. Locals alleged to the AL lawmakers that police tortured Sumon to death. Local leaders of the AL were also present during the 45-minute visit to the area.

On Tuesday, the AL lawmakers visited the Police Station and the house from where Sumon was arrested with four others allegedly during a robbery bid on Thursday. "Owner of the house also told us that there was no incident of robbery on that day", Shahid added.

The AL team is likely to visit North Badda today to probe into the death of Saiful Islam, another victim who died allegedly in the custody at Gulshan Police Station.

# Janatar Mancha

FROM PAGE 12 participate in or assist political activities. But in 1996, some officials so this in their personal interests. They should be punished to ensure discipline and chain of command in the public administration, he added.

Meanwhile, a case has already been filed against some officials for their alleged involvement with the Jantar Mancha during the previous BNP rule in 1996 after a controversial general election.

The parliamentary body however did not discuss the case.

One source said some members of the body stressed downsizing the number of ministries from 40 to 20. The issue will be discussed at its next meeting, he added.

The committee recommended upgrading the status of diploma health technologists to class two officers from class three.

The meeting was attended by committee members and officials concerned. The state minister for finance and planning, who now is in charge of the ministry, was present at the meeting as the prime minister's representative.

# JS body

FROM PAGE 1 dissatisfaction at the price hike and demanded urgent and strict measures to keep the prices in check.

At the meeting at the BNP central office at Naya Paltan with the party Secretary General, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan in the chair, several leaders accused the government of laxity in managing state affairs.

The meeting, called to lay out a programme to observe the National Revolution and Solidarity Day on November 7, also discussed law and order downside, traffic jam, extortion and other crimes.

A weeklong programme will begin on November 6 with a discussion highlighting the significance of the day. The BNP and its different front organisations will visit the mazar of late president Ziaur Rahman and place wreaths.

Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman, Food Minister Abdullah Al Noman, Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas, State Minister for Cultural Affairs Selima Rahman, Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Joint Secretary Goyeshwar Chandra Roy, State Minister for Labour and Manpower Amanullah Aman and central leaders Mofiqul Hasan Tripti and Syed Emran Saleh Prince were also present.

# Bail fixing

FROM PAGE 1 been guilty of gross misconduct, the president will, by an order, remove the judge.

Supreme Court Bar Association President Rokonuddin Mahmud at a meeting of the association on October 1 alleged that Judge Syed Shahidur Rahman received Tk 50,000 from a client for fixing a bail from the court of a judge friend in a woman repression case.

The judge was appointed on April 24 in the face objection by the Bar association and senior lawyers of the Supreme Court. They alleged that when Shahidur was an office bearer of the association, he pocketed the organisation's funds.

The chief justice sent the reference file on October 20 to the president for his approval and the law ministry on October 23 sent the chief justice's request for probe to the prime minister.

# Biggest power outage

FROM PAGE 1 demand of 3300 MW. Dhaka that consumes about 1400 MW sweated in darkness with only about 500 MW available.

Sources said it will take another day to restore full power supply. Hospitals suspended scheduled operations, saving energy for only emergency surgeries.

The trouble began when the biggest power plant -- the 450 MW AES Meghnaghat unit -- tripped at 9:35am due to a technical glitch in the transmission system.

"Power from different plants converge at the Ashuganj power grid. We suspect this grid tripped because of high voltage," said a source. "This might have affected the Meghnaghat plant."

The sudden shutdown of the Meghnaghat plant put tremendous pressure on other plants connected to the national grid. Within minutes, they also started tripping one after another.

Only Mymensingh and Sylhet regions remained online as two power plants there continued functioning independently.

But the 140 MW Rural Power Company Limited (RPCL) plant in Mymensingh and the Fenchuganj 90 MW power plant are too inadequate to act as emergency sources for important offices.

"As an immediate action, we tried to start auxiliary power sys-

tems of some major plants to take pressure off main plants for their restart. This has always worked, but this time it did not," said a PDB source.

Even though engineers started a 30 MW auxiliary system at Baghabari, the main plant tripped again as soon as it was connected to the national grid.

By 11:00am, the engineers made another abortive attempt to start an auxiliary system at Ashuganj. However, at around 11:30am, they succeeded to start the Ashuganj and Shahjibazar power systems and limited power supply resumed at important installations.

At the Secretariat and adjacent areas, power supply resumed at 12:35 noon and slowly to other areas of the capital. However, the supply remained erratic.

State Minister for Power Iqbal Hasan Mahmud blamed technical glitches for the power failure.

"This is totally related to technical matters and we can never say whether such things will happen in the future. But we will take measures to avoid such things," he said.

Our correspondent in Barisal said power supplies remained cutoff in all the 21 southwestern districts till 12:20pm. At 12:24pm, only 5MW was restored in Barisal zone against a demand of 60MW.

# Outage slows life

FROM PAGE 1 them into action," said a banker at Motijheel commercial heart.

"Exporters hard pressed with urgent business were really in hot water," he added.

The apparel sector was the worst sufferer as thousands of workers sat idle because of no alternative source of power to about 80 percent garments factories.

"Production, office work with banks and other organisations were badly affected which will delay shipment in the end. It's a big blow to us," said SM Nurul Hoque, acting president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

Not only stitching, but ironing, washing and other power-propelled activities suffered hugely, even at factories with generators, exporters said.

Ferrying of goods from stores to facilities was stalled as lifts did not move.

"We could not declare a general holiday because of the outage as we did not know for sure when power would be back," said Abdul Karim, managing director of Zenith Garments at Mohakhali.

"Around 350 workers at his factory spent the whole day without work," Karim told The Daily Star last night.

The owners fear that the outage would cause huge stock lots because many factories are likely to miss shipments of their export goods.

A large chunk of the exports would have to be sent by air at 10 times higher fares, they said.

Bankers said they had no option but to handle urgent tasks in dimly

candle-lit rooms.

"It is not possible to work for hours without power," remarked a banker at Dilkusha where power failure lingered from 10:00am to 1:30pm, hampering work in peak hours.

The printing presses, engaged in publishing books, were also hit hard.

"It's the peak season for us. We're working round the clock and most of us don't have generators," said a press owner at Nikhet.

"Fourteen of my workers did little today," he said.

"Besides, I had some urgent banking work that I could not do due to the power crisis."

# Coastguards

FROM PAGE 12 anchorage with 4,000 tonnes of refined palm oil from Indonesia on July 15, port sources said.

Following a dispute between the supplier and importer over payment against the imported oil, the cargo ship was stranded at the outer anchorage since its arrival, said sources at Seacom Shipping Line (SSL), local agent of the vessel.

Chittagong Port's radio control department lost contact with the ship Tuesday night and the SSL sources said the vessel left the port without paying port dues and other shipping charges.

The principal of MV Filma have been asked to locate the fleeing ship and regional ports were informed to trace it, the SSL sources added.

SNS International, a Dhaka-based business house, imported the refined palm oil, sources said.

# JCD politics

FROM PAGE 12 ers still remain expelled till date.

Among the 32 are JCD DU unit Senior Vice-president Golam Hafiz Nahin and Saimullah Hall Joint Secretary Daneshul Islam Danesh, who were expelled for beating up fellow JCD leaders.

Six JCD activists of Zahurul Haque Hall were expelled recently for beating up a JCD leader of Ziaur Rahman Hall, who later filed a case in connection with the incident.

Four JCD leaders and activists of Ziaur Rahman Hall unit, three of Fazlul Haque Hall unit, two of Salimullah Hall unit, three of Mohsin Hall unit and one of Shahidullah Hall unit were expelled in the past few months for their involvement in anti-party activities.

Poly Majumder, joint secretary of Shamsunnahar Hall unit, was also expelled for similar reasons while three activists of Zahurul Haque Hall unit were expelled over a clash between the hall unit president and general secretary. Two other JCD activists including a hall unit leader were expelled after they beat up a fellow worker in front of the JCD General Secretary Azizul Bari Helal inside the Madhus Canteen.

Helal told The Daily Star the expulsions were necessary to rid the party of the bad image earned by trouble-mongers. He denied there are factions within the JCD but admitted that the problem lies in the competition for leadership at the low level, adding that the hall authorities need more capability to control residents.

JCD President Shahabuddin Laltu said some scattered incidents occurred within the party because it is a large organisation. "But we will take action to uphold discipline and chain of command in the JCD," he added.

Meanwhile, most of the 81 members of the DU unit committee leaders have distanced themselves from organisational activities and are busy pursuing personal agenda including jobs.

Many were frustrated because

# Dhaka to open consulates at Chicago, Sydney

Chinese parliament speaker may visit Dhaka late next month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government plans to set up two new consulates at Chicago and Sydney, considering the commercial importance of the cities and presence of huge expatriate Bangla-deshis, foreign ministry sources said.

The new consulate will raise the number of missions in the US to four. There are two consulates at New York and Los Angeles apart from the embassy at Washington.

Bangladesh has a sole mission at Canberra, capital of Australia. The new consulate will be opened at commercial city of Sydney. Over 10,000 Bangladeshis currently live in Australia.

The new consulates are likely to start functioning in January next.

Meanwhile, foreign ministry sources said Speaker of People's Congress of China Zia King Lin is likely to visit Bangladesh in the last week of November this year.

An advance team will come to Dhaka soon to finalise the visit. The Chinese ambassador in Dhaka called on Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan Tuesday and discussed the upcoming visit.

The visit is expected to strengthen the relations between the two nations, as the speaker ranks third in the warrant of precedence of the government of China, sources said.

# Sonali Bank

FROM PAGE 1 default loans), Riverside Leather and Food Industry (Tk 49.50 crore), Ajax Jute Mills Ltd (Tk 43 crore), Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (Tk 13 crore), Sonali Cotton Mills (Tk 40 crore), Ahmed Jute Mills (Tk 39 crore) and Yusuf Brothers Tannery (Tk 38 crore).

# Ministry tags

FROM PAGE 12 (Dhaka Metropolitan Police) Commissioner Ashraful Huda were also present at the meeting.

Already 20 mobile courts and 40 strike forces comprising over 5,000 police, BDR and ansar personnel began cracking down on illegal parking and other traffic law violations on the first day of Ramadan on Tuesday.

But there was no appreciable change in the situation on the second day of the drive yesterday as rush hour traffic, like the day before, again came to a grinding halt at different city points.

Seventeen mobile courts filed 203 cases against vehicles and also fined them Tk 71,525 for violating traffic laws yesterday.

The courts also removed way-side illegal structures from Pallabi, Mohammadpur, Paltan, and Gulistan, and in front of Notre Dame College, Shapla Chattar, Shilpa Bhaban and Bangladesh Bank, a home ministry press release said. Roadside hawkers were also driven away from those areas, it added.

Mobile courts in Lalbagh also cleared out the Chawkbazar area, while similar eviction drives were carried out from Jatrabari to Shanir Akhra.

Roadside hawkers from Abdullapur to Uttara Police Station were also ejected.

The mobile court at Dhanmondi cleared the footpaths around Jhikatola bus stand and Elephant Road, the press release said.

# Pakistan-Indian

FROM PAGE 12 would serve the purpose of what Indians call people-to-people contacts," he said.

He said Pakistan had agreed in principle to India's offer of starting a bus service between Muzaffarabad, state capital of Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, and Srinagar, the summer capital of Indian-controlled Kashmir, across the Line of Control (LOC).

"But, as you know, this involves travelling in disputed area, and we are of the considered view that the checkpoints, wherever they are established along the Line of Control, must be manned, controlled by the United Nations and people on the two sides can move with UN documents," he added.

New Delhi said it would not resume direct dialogue with Pakistan unless evidence on the ground showed "cross-border terrorism" in Kashmir was being brought to an end.

Khokhar said Pakistan in recent months had done "just about everything possible" to stop rebels crossing from Pakistani to Indian Kashmir, but it was impossible for any country to completely seal its borders.

"As far as Pakistan is concerned it's done its utmost and that's where the matter rests. The ball is in India's court."

He said Pakistan had also accepted New Delhi's proposal to establish a hot line between coast guards and maritime agencies of the two countries to help prevent fishermen straying into each other's coastal waters.

"We insist on a sustained and serious dialogue between the two countries for a lasting peace between the two countries. We hope that India will reconsider its position on the resumption of the composite talks," Khokhar said.

# England take charge

FROM PAGE 1 87 without loss. The match came to life after the break with the Tigers making fast inroads.

England openers Michael Vaughan and Marcus Trescothick were looking in ominous touch and had put on 126 with little trouble when Mahmud made the first breakthrough.

Trescothick (60), who had made his intentions clear by clubbing three sixes, flashed at a delivery outside the off-stump and the ball ballooned into the hands of Mushfiqur Rahman at backward point.

Mushfiq earlier floored a difficult chance off the opener when he was on 34.

Mark Butcher came in and whacked Rafique over widish mid-wicket for a four. But he played the very next ball staying back on the crease and missed the line completely to have his off stump rattled.

Mahmud made an inspired bowling change by taking himself off and bringing in his strike paceman Mashrafe who had toiled without success in the morning session.

The gamble reaped immediate reward with the country's fastest bowler taking two wickets in five balls.

# JCD rivals clash

FROM PAGE 12 JCD President Amirul Islam Khan Alam beat up Zakaria on the campus yesterday, leaving him seriously injured.

As police tried to rescue Zakaria, agitated JCD workers threw bricks-bats at them, injuring the constable and the SI.

A number of JCD leaders and activists from different halls then marched to Shahidullah Hall, assaulted some activists of Zakaria-led faction and drove out many others. The Amjad-led faction occupied the hall.

JCD President Sahabuddin Laltu, General Secretary Azizul Bari Helal and other central leaders visited the hall later on and were trying to bring the situation under control.

A tense situation was prevailing at the hall and on the campus, as well.

Meanwhile, unidentified persons threw stones at a police official's jeep on the campus, causing damages. Police said some students are trying to provoke them.

Additional police forces have been deployed on the campus.

# Earth buffeted

FROM PAGE 12 According to scientists the flare is the third largest detected since regular solar monitoring began 25 years ago.

It is the strongest flare since 2001 which itself was the most powerful since 1989.

A less powerful flare, also in 1989, caused disruption of power grids in Canada.

Observations from the Solar Heliospheric Observatory (Soho) satellite, monitoring the Sun from a gravitational balance point closer to the Sun than the Earth, saw the so-called Coronal Mass Ejection (CME) rise from the Sun on Tuesday.

Estimates of its velocity suggested it was moving at 7.5 million kilometres a hour, about five times faster than usual.

According to Soho astronomer Paal Brekke, "The magnetic cloud slammed into the Earth's magnetosphere and created a G5 geomagnetic storm, the strongest category."

However, monitoring suggests that the storm weakened quickly.

Experts say this weakening was probably due to the CME's magnetic field which had a northward pointing magnetic component.

Had it been pointing south, they say, the result would have been a much more severe and long lasting geomagnetic storm.

This is because if a CME has a magnetic field pointing south it interacts more violently with the Earth's magnetosphere.

# Bush still defiant

FROM PAGE 12 targets with blockades and checkpoints and keep US strike forces ready to move against the guerrillas.

"But as well, we've got to make sure that not only we harden targets but that we get actionable intelligence to intercept the missions before they begin. That means more Iraqis involved in the intelligence-gathering systems in their countries, so that they are active participants in securing the country from further harm," he said.

Bush seemed to be using the news conference to underscore that much hard work remains in Iraq, a day after he told reporters that the guerrilla attacks should be seen as a sign of progress because they show the desperation of those trying to drive out the Americans.

"It's dangerous, and it's tough," he said.

Bush, who has complained in the past that foreign militants were crossing into Iraq from Syria and Iran to take up arms against US forces, said he expected those two countries to enforce border controls to stop infiltrators, but toned down his rhetoric against them.

"We're working closely with

Vaughan (54 off 124 balls) was caught behind and two balls later, Graham Thorpe dragged the ball on to the stumps leaving the tourists on a tricky 134 for four.

The Tigers were then thwarted by the partnership between Hussain and all-rounder Clarke.

Clarke was confident from the beginning and mixed aggression with caution. He reached his maiden Test fifty in his second match with an expansive shot for four in the last session of the match.

On 36, Hussain was dropped by Rafique off his own bowling. The veteran right-hander then survived a close call just before stumps when a Mashrafe delivery took his edge and sailed between two slip fielders who were too slow to react.

Bangladesh fielded the first Test in Dhaka while England were forced to replace injured paceman Stephen Harmison with Middlesex seamer Richard Johnson. The tourists also decided to drop off-spinner Gareth Batty and gave quick bowler Martin Saggars his Test debut.

# Two boys killed in road mishaps

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two young boys were killed in separate road accidents in Gulshan and Motijheel in a span of eight hours ending at 6:30am yesterday.

Robin, 10, was standing beside the road at Shahajadpur when a Dhaka-bound bus from Gaibandha hit him at around 6:30am. He died on the spot.

Police seized the bus abandoned by its driver from the spot. Faridul Islam Ripon, Robin's father, filed a case with Gulshan Police Station.

In the other incident, Mohammad Yusuf, 12, and his cousin Masum Mollah, 14, suffered serious injuries when they were hit by broken parts of a truck, which ranned into a median, in front of Khilgaon Government High School at about 9:30pm Tuesday.

Locals rushed to Dhaka, a cooked food supplier, to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he died at around 10:30pm.

Masum is undergoing treatment at a local clinic.

Police seized the truck but could not arrest its driver.

# BB unruly staffs

FROM PAGE 1 Motijheel Police Station at 8:00pm yesterday.

A group of unruly employees of the central bank barged into the room of the governor to raise some illogical demands at 2:00pm Tuesday, said the diary. They also misbehaved with the governor and called his names.

As the BB services are essential, such behaviour is unacceptable under the Bank Company Act and is a punishable crime. Therefore, police have been requested to launch an enquiry and take lawful actions against the culprits, according to the diary.

An official at Motijheel Police Station said they would start investigating the matter soon.

The CBA leaders meanwhile tried in vain yesterday to meet the governor again. They then met Executive Director Nazmul Hasan and asked him to let them know by 4:00pm yesterday if any decision was taken about their demands.

CBA General Secretary Zainal

Abedin told journalists in the afternoon, "If they do not inform us about the management decision, we will stage a rally in front of the central bank gate tomorrow (Thursday). We will announce our next course of actions from there."

BB Executive Director Nazmul Hasan meanwhile told journalists, "We have scrutinised their demands. But the demand to promote officials fell far beyond our jurisdiction. The other CBA demands are neither valid nor realistic."

High level sources at the finance ministry said the government was very embarrassed specially when a team of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is now in Dhaka.

The governor and Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman are likely to sit with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia soon to discuss ways to tackle such embarrassing situations in future, sources said.

# Israeli troops kill Palestinian on Gaza border

REUTERS, Gaza

Israeli soldiers shot dead a Palestinian and wounded another on Israel's boundary with the Gaza Strip yesterday and found an explosive device apparently left by the pair nearby, military sources said.

In the West Bank, Palestinian gunmen fired on an Israeli car and wounded one of its two occupants, military sources said, in an attack claimed by a militant group linked to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction.

Persistent violence has sidelined a US-backed Middle East peace "road map" plan which charts steps leading to the establishment by 2005 of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, lands occupied by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war.