

Warehouse fire panics RMG workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Panic spread among hundreds of traders and garment workers at Karwan Bazar in the capital when a warehouse caught fire yesterday. The fire originated from candlelight when a worker of a painting warehouse on the first floor of Kabba Kas Super Market was using it at around 12:45pm, as electricity was off for a long time, witnesses said.

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Juba Dal leader killed in Rab 'crossfire'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj
A Juba Dal leader having criminal records was killed during a shootout between his accomplices and members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in Narayanganj town early yesterday. Rab sources said Habibur Rahman alias 'Bhua' Habib, 40, was

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TIGHT MONETARY POLICY

Private sector credit dips

So do import, govt borrowing trend

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The IMF-prescribed contractionary monetary policy has decelerated the private sector credit in the current fiscal year (FY), but it helped reduce the balance of payment deficit.

The private-sector credit growth shrunk by 2.26 percentage points over the second quarter, sliding down from 17.2 percent at end-September to 14.94 percent on December 31, according to Bangladesh Bank (BB) data.

Similarly, the government borrowing trend also marked a 9.19-percentage-point decline over the quarter thanks to the third tranche of Development Support Credit

received from the World Bank and a sales hike in the savings instruments in December.

The sales of savings instrument that had ebbed in September through November peaked in December following an interest rate hike by the government.

The net government credit growth dipped to 21.21 percent at end-December from 30.4 percent on September 30.

On the contrary, the credit growth to the state-owned agencies posted an 8.41-percentage-point hike over the quarter, hitting 60.21 percent on December 31 from 51.8 percent on September 30. The increase was mostly due to a heavy bank borrowing by Bangladesh Petroleum

Corporation (BPC) to meet its growing fuel costs.

In the recent months, the BPC borrowed around Tk 10,000 crore from the nationalised commercial banks, with Sonali Bank alone lending Tk 6,000 crore. As a result, the bank is now facing a critical liquidity crisis and is considering seeking help from the finance ministry soon to survive the situation, sources said.

The central bank is pursuing the tight monetary policy expressly to ease pressure on the balance of payment (BoP) and rein in inflation. It is why the interest rates on bank loans, treasury bills and

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Petrobangla asks Niko to restore supply from Feni gas field

UNB, Dhaka

Petrobangla is annoyed by Niko's suspension of gas supply from its Feni gas field.

Petrobangla officials considered the action on the part of Niko as "a serious attempt to blackmail" the government.

In a letter yesterday, Petrobangla asked Niko to immediately restore gas production in the field and resume supply to the government.

Petrobangla also viewed the Niko's action as a breach of the terms of JVA (joint venture agreement).

It said any breach of the terms of JVA "might constrain us to take any serious step under the law of Bangladesh."

On Monday, Niko Resources, the Canadian operator of Feni and Tengratila (Chhatak) gas fields, halted its gas production and supply from the Feni field demanding immediate settlement of the gas price issue and payment to the

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PHOTO: STAR

14-party opposition combine stages a sit-in yesterday at Demra on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway to protest fertiliser, power and diesel crises.

CTG RMG FACTORY FIRE

Probe finds flaws in construction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The probe committee headed by Additional Secretary Sirajul Islam found a lot of flaws in the construction and the safety measures at KTS Composite Textile Mill at Kalurghat where the February 23 inferno left at least 54 workers burnt alive and over hundred others injured. At the meeting held at Chittagong Circuit House on Monday evening, FBCCI Director Mohammad Amirul Haq, a member of the probe committee, said that KTS textile and garment factory was constructed in violation of Building Construction Rule and in deviation of the design approved by the Chittagong Development Authority.

The factory authorities ignored the matter of maintaining good

working environment and safety of the workers.

During the fire both the main gates and one of the two staircases were locked.

The factory did not have sufficient space for installing machinery while a boiler set up beside the wall posed a constant threat, Amirul Haq said yesterday.

The KTS authorities employed a good number of child labourers on poor wages, many of whom were burnt alive or severely injured, he said.

The authorities did not arrange Group Insurance for over one thousand workers of the factory.

Suggesting punitive measures against the KTS owner and others

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PHOTO: STAR

DEATH TRAP...The stolen metal plates between the segments of the First Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge on the Buriganga have not been replaced as the bridge remains poorly maintained.

AK47 rifles, guns seized in CHT

UNB, Bandarban

Security forces yesterday seized a large cache of arms and ammunition, including five AK47 rifles, from the remote forest area in Alikadam upazila of the district.

Army sources said acting on a tip-off, the troops raided a den of criminals in Mirinja range area, 15 kilometres off Alikadam, and recovered the arms and ammunition.

The seized arms and ammunition included magazines of AK47 rifle, 3,000 bullets and military equipment including bandolier.

Earlier in another raid on Friday,

one AK47 rifle, one M16 rifle and over 500 rounds of bullet were recovered from the same area.

KHAGRACHHARI
A BDNEWS report says: An army patrol team of Lakkhichhari zone under Guimara region in Khagrachhari yesterday arrested two criminals in Kailas Mahajanpara area.

The security forces also seized two SBBL guns, 50 rounds of bullets, toll collecting receipts and some important documents from their possession.

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PHOTO: STAR

Children play on the almost dried up riverbed of the Kaliganga under the bridge at Tora in Manikganj on Dhaka-Paturia highway. The once mighty river shrank into a narrow stream in this dry season.

41 killed as blasts rock Baghdad

GI, 2 British soldiers die in separate attacks

AP, Baghdad

Five explosions including three car bombs, a suicide attacker wearing an explosives belt and a blast near the National Theatre rocked Baghdad Tuesday, killing 41 people and wounding scores, police said.

The suicide attacker joined a line of people waiting to buy kerosene before detonating the explosives strapped to his body, witnesses said in the eastern New Baghdad neighbourhood. The blast killed 23 people and injured 51, said Interior Ministry official Maj. Falah al-Mohammedawi.

A car bomb targeting a police patrol in the same neighbourhood killed nine people and injured 17 all civilians said police Lt. Alu Abbas and medic Rahim al-Waedi.

Another car bomb exploded near a Shia mosque in the crowded

southeastern Karada neighbourhood, killing four people and injuring 16, said al-Mohammedawi.

Police said the vehicle was parked next to a small market opposite the Timimi mosque, which was closed for repairs. But witnesses said the vehicle was driven by a suicide attacker.

Distraught residents rushed to the scene, as fire fighters fought back flames from burning cars.

A roadside bomb targeting the convoy of a defence ministry adviser killed five soldiers and injured seven others, ministry spokesman Mohammed al-Askari said. The adviser, Lt. Gen. Daham Radhi al-Assal, escaped without harm, he said.

A fifth blast took place in an open area near the downtown national theatre,

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POWER, FUEL, FERTILISER CRISES

14-party blocks roads, demands solution

STAR REPORT

Awami League (AL)-led 14-party opposition coalition yesterday took to the streets in the capital and elsewhere in the country to observe its two-hour sit-in programmes protesting the ongoing power, fuel, fertiliser and seed crises throughout the country and against price hikes of everyday essentials.

Accusing the BNP-Jamaat alliance government of failure to ensure adequate supply of electricity, fuel, fertiliser and seeds, the opposition leaders demanded immediate resignation of the alliance rulers.

They also demanded immediate steps to put an end to the prevailing crises for the greater interests of the

SSC candidates and the farmers.

Dhaka City unit of AL, 11-left leaning party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) and National Awami Party (NAP) blocked the Dhaka-Chittagong highway near Jatrabari intersection during their sit-in and performed protest songs demanding immediate resignation of the four-party alliance government.

Due to the roadblock more than a hundred vehicles towards the capital stood still on the road creating a five-kilometre long traffic jam.

Dhaka City AL General Secretary Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya told journalists that the people supported their sit-in in a large scale though the programme caused temporary sufferings for people coming to the

capital.

Addressing the gathering, the opposition leaders said the alliance government has hiked up the prices of everyday essentials in a planned way only to become rich. They have looted thousands of crores of taka from the people and also taken profit-shares from all sorts of businesses giving rise to the price spiral, they said.

They also reiterated their resolve that they will not allow any election in the country until their proposed reforms in the system of caretaker government and the Election Commission (EC) are carried out. The opposition leaders

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JUDICIARY SEPARATION

Hearing on contempt rule today

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Hearing on the contempt rule against nine bureaucrats on charges of distorting the judgement of judiciary separation case will be held in the Supreme Court (SC) today.

The five-member full bench of the Appellate Division, headed by Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassir Husain, will also hear a contempt petition against another nine bureaucrats and the government proceedings regarding implementation of the Supreme Court's

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55 die as Maoists blow off a truck in India

AGENCIES, Raipur, India

Maoists rebels set off a landmine under a truck yesterday in Chhattisgarh, killing 55 people who belonged to a government-sponsored anti-Maoist group, police said.

The attack came on the eve of a visit to the country by US President George W. Bush and was one of the biggest by Maoists in recent years.

"Maoists set off a landmine in Darnamara area in Dantewada district, killing 55 people," senior police officer S.K Paswan told Reuters.

The dead were tribal members returning in trucks after attending an anti-Maoist meeting organised by the state, he said.

The state's Home Minister Ram Vichar Netam said 20 people had been seriously wounded and the death toll could rise.

Police senior superintendent

Pawan Dev warned that the toll may rise as many people are injured and the nearest hospital is about 25 kilometres from where the attack took place.

Police intelligence officer Paswan said the victims were returning to their village of Konta after attending an anti-Maoist campaign in a neighbouring village.

The "public-awakening" campaign was organised by a politician. It involves peace marches in which thousands of Chhattisgarh residents have been participating to combat Maoist violence.

This month alone the rebels have killed 19 security officials and more than a dozen residents in Dantewada district. Paswan said that around 100 people died in 2005 in Maoist violence in Chhattisgarh state.

The official said a police party

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Focus on nuke pact as Bush flies in India today

AGENCIES, New Delhi

With India and the United States struggling to work out a nuclear pact before President Bush arrives today, India's prime minister pledged Monday not to compromise the country's security to seal the deal.

During his visit beginning today, Bush is likely to find excitement over Indian-US ties mixed with ambivalence about siding up to a nation

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Prayer Timing		
March 1		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-10	5-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-07	6-11
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

