

**MANIKGANJ-4 BY-POLLS
BNP candidate's
nomination
cancelled for
loan default**

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

The returning officer of Manikganj-4 parliamentary by-election yesterday cancelled the candidature of BNP nominated candidate engineer Mainul Islam Khan Shanto on charge of defaulting loan.

A Bangladesh Bank (BB) fax message sent to the Deputy Commissioner's (DC) office said Mainul Islam Khan Shanto is a loan defaulter, the Returning Officer, Manikganj DC SM Shamsher Zakaria said.

Another BB fax message said Shanto was a director of Islam Jute
SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

KARNAPHULI BRIDGE

Ministry going ahead with faulty design

SHARIER KHAN

Ignoring a consultant's review, the communications ministry is going ahead with a faulty design for the 900-metre Karnaphuli bridge to be constructed by a Chinese company, said a highly placed source.

The bid for this project was floated in January in an unusual hurry and with unusual terms, making four short-listed bidders for the project to stay away from participation in it. Only three bidders participated.

But when the authorities scrutinised the three offers with the help of a Japanese consultant, it was found that all the three contained faulty and bad designs, not suitable for the project.

Being aware of their shortcomings, the bidders then requested the authorities to extend the time frame to enable them to come up with flawless designs but the authorities turned down their request.

"The situation demands a fresh tender with standard bid terms and conditions," notes one source.

But the communications ministry is determined to see the project going ahead. It has found the Tk 300 crore plus offer of "China Major Bridge" company as the lowest. It wants the project implementing authorities— Roads and Highways Department (R&HD)— to award the bid to this Chinese company, and that the bidder will "correct" the design flaws later on.

"But it may not be that easy because the bridge is to be
SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

**EDEN COLLEGE
Student strike
today to protest
JCD attack**

DU CORRESPONDENT

Chhatra Sangram Parishad, a combine of opposition backed student organisations, will observe students' strike at educational institutions across the country today demanding punishment to the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) cadres involved in the recent attack on the students of Eden University College.

Ongoing Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examinations will remain out of the purview of the strike.

Dhaka University (DU) authorities suspended all the examinations scheduled for today due to
SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

FOREIGN WORKERS

Govt to draw list

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

The government has taken an initiative to prepare a complete list of foreigners working in Bangladesh following allegations that some of them indulge in suspicious activities.

The initiative has been speeding up recently as the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) asked the Board of Investment (BoI) to conduct a survey in this connection.

Different intelligence agencies reported to the PMO that some foreigners are involved in suspicious activities in Bangladesh.

A high level committee headed by the additional secretary to commerce ministry will meet today to take further action regarding the matter.

The committee will prepare a list of foreign owned and joint venture department stores, shopping malls, restaurants, liaison offices and shared offices.

It will review the economic impact of the operations of these offices in Bangladesh and assess whether the foreigners working in those offices have valid permissions.

The committee will also prepare

a report suggesting whether these foreign owned business ventures are actually contributing to Bangladesh economy.

If the committee finds the foreign business ventures unnecessary for Bangladesh economy it will suggest bringing changes in the foreign investment policy to curtail or ban the operations of those business entities.

BoI sources said some intelligence agencies, especially the special branch, alleged that around 50,000 foreign workers are working in Bangladesh without having work permits or valid approvals.

A high level committee headed by the BoI executive chairman in January 2005 in a report said around 100,000 foreigners are working in Bangladesh without work permits.

The report said these foreign workers are working in different service sectors especially in hospitality, medical, consultancy, banks, schools and information technology as well as manufacturing sectors like textile, pharmaceutical and cement industries.

It said the workers mainly from India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka came
SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Outlaw killed in 'shootout'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An armed cadre of outlawed New Biplobi Communist Party (NBPC) was killed during a "shootout" between the members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and his accomplices at Chahera village under Dumuria upazila of Khulna district early yesterday.

Being tipped-off, Rab arrested Mohammad Rezaul Karim, 33, at Sholgata village under the upazila on Monday night.

On his confessional statement, the members of the elite force along with Rezaul set out for Chahera to arrest his cohorts and recover firearms.

When they reached the village at about 2:30am, Rezaul's accomplices opened fire, forcing the
SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Prayer Timing		
March 22		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-55	5-30
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-16	6-20
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

Seismic survey may damage biodiversity of St Martin's island

Experts body says on planned gas, oil exploration

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Any seismic survey for gas or oil exploration within a radius of 10 kilometres of the Saint Martin's Island may seriously affect the biodiversity and ecological balance of the coral island, a high-powered environment ministry expert committee observed.

The observation was based on an in-depth survey on the state of bio-diversity of the island carried out by the committee, which was formed on February 19. It submitted the report yesterday to the environment and forest ministry. The director general of the Department of Environment (DoE) headed the committee.

The report suggested that if any gas or oil exploration has to be done it can be done outside the danger zone of the 10 kilometres radius, otherwise it might kill corals as well as other species that are invaluable for the ecological balance.

Besides, environmentalists

feared that a seismic survey might also harm habitats of crocodiles and other marine lives in the Bay of Bengal.

Asked about this, Environment and Forest Minister Tariqul Islam told The Daily Star that they have received the expert committee report.

"The report will now be examined at an inter-ministerial meeting before making a decision about it," he said adding that the government attaches highest importance to maintaining the bio-diversity and ecological balance of the only coral island in the country.

The environment ministry halted the seismic survey in the area conducted by Irish gas and oil company Tullow on February 9.

Sources said Tullow will be allowed to conduct its seismic survey beyond the 10 kilometres radius zone.

Tullow was allowed to explore
SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



A section of Dhaka Wasa employees at Fakirerpool pump illegally sells water under the authorities' nose. 'Buyers' say they pay Tk 100 to Tk 150 for a van load of water in drums.

Man dies in queue for fertiliser

Farmers block roads

STAR REPORT

A person died waiting in a long queue for fertiliser in Kurigram yesterday, while fertiliser-hungry farmers blocked highways for hours in Dinajpur and Rangpur districts demanding adequate supply of fertiliser in the peak IRRI-Boro season.

The dead was identified as Mantu, 32, a rickshawpuller of
SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Rejoinder, our reply

In a rejoinder on The Daily Star report headlined "Last minute changes drive away bidders" published yesterday, the shipping ministry has said the news was not based on facts.

"The Ministry of Shipping has not made any such amendment. Any kind of violation of any rule or circular in processing tenders, as expressed in the news, will be examined by the ministry on receipt of the proposal relating to it," the rejoinder said.

Our reply
The Chittagong Port Authority
SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Another case against Pintu withdrawn

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday withdrew another criminal case, the third so far, filed against ruling BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu.

Judge Mohammad Aman Ullah granted the petition for withdrawal of the case filed for an explosion in the yard of Pintu's 25 Maneswar Road residence in Lalbagh that left one dead and seven others seriously injured nine years back.

Earlier, the government on March 22 withdrew the first case against Pintu filed for robbing at gunpoint tender documents for auction of a bankrupt company's property. Pintu was arrested on December 26, 2001 on the charge.

The government on April 2 last year withdrew the second case against Pintu and a dozen others

filed for assaulting and injuring police and Awami League members.

In the order, the judge said after scrutinising the documents of the case the charges brought against Pintu and others were found politically motivated. So, the charges were withdrawn and all the accused were discharged from the allegations, the judge said.

The withdrawal order was passed yesterday in absence of Pintu and two other accused although they had been earlier directed by the same court to appear.

Pintu last appeared before the court in the case on October 4, 2000 and has been absent from the court for 26 consecutive dates.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

NEPAL

33 killed as Maoists clash with cops

AFP, Kathmandu

Ten police officers and 23 Maoists were killed in new violence in Nepal yesterday, two days after the rebels announced a fresh initiative to topple the monarchy in the world's only Hindu kingdom.

Officials and witnesses said rebels attacked a police post in the village of Birtamod around 600km east of Kathmandu as well as a police post in nearby Sunsari district.

The attacks in eastern Nepal left 10 police officers and 3 Maoists dead, chief district officer Bhola Prasad Shivakoti and police officials in the capital said.
Shivakoti said 20 officers were

injured, three of them seriously.

A local journalist who witnessed the attack, Lila Baral, said the rebels arrived in two trucks and attacked the police post from all sides, taking control of the area for about 45 minutes before fleeing.

All markets remained shut and highways were deserted after the incident.

The army meanwhile said its soldiers launched an offensive at Dharechowk 50km west of Kathmandu that killed at least 20 rebels.

"So far 20 bodies of Maoist rebels have been recovered from the clash site," an army official said.
SEE PAGE 15 COL 2