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TEJGAON BUILDING COLLAPSE Owner gets bail after depositing Tk 1.2 crore as compensation

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Deen Mohammad, owner of Phoenix building that collapsed last month, obtained bail along with five others yesterday from a Dhaka court after depositing Tk 1.20 crore as compensation for the victims of the disaster.

Deen deposited the money to a current account named "Phoenix Building Collapse Victims" at Sonali Bank court branch yesterday and his lawyers prayed bail after showing the court the receipt of the deposit money.

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REFORMS DIALOGUE PM okays AL allies' inclusion in committee

BNP to send reply letter soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ruling BNP is going to write back to the Awami League conveying its readiness that the proposed committee to discuss the opposition's reform proposals may include representatives of the AL's left-leaning allies.

The AL's 14-party allies, who do not have representatives in parliament, will now be able to be members of the committee.

BNP Secretary General Abdul

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SC Bar demands judicial probe into 'crossfire' killings

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) yesterday demanded judicial investigation into 204 extra-judicial killings in the name of "encounter" and "crossfire" in the last two years.

SCBA President Advocate Mahbubey Alam and Secretary Advocate M Enayetur Rahim in a statement also blasted the government for giving Swadhinata Padak

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

CEC faces contempt for 'lacking confidence' in SC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday issued a suo moto contempt order against Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz and BNP lawmaker Nurul Islam Moni apparently for lacking confidence in the apex court dealing with the much-talked about voter list case.

The full bench of the Appellate Division chaired by Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassar Husain ordered the CEC and the ruling BNP lawmaker to show cause by April 9 as to why contempt proceedings should not be brought against them.

The chief justice also said the

CEC's leave to appeal petition against the High Court's January 4 directives on voter list will remain adjourned until disposal of the contempt issue. The next hearing on the matter will be held on April 9.

Nurul Islam Moni on February 4 sent a "confidential and urgent letter" to Advocate Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed, MP, chief counsel for the CEC.

The letter sought to bring to the recipient's notice Awami League (AL) lawmaker Dr Alauddin Ahmed's comments at a talk show on satellite TV channel ATN Bangla.

It says Alauddin Ahmed had remarked that the CEC, also a sitting

judge of the Supreme Court, would have to leave the Election Commission (EC) after February 6, the date scheduled for hearing on the leave to appeal.

The counsel for the CEC on February 5 attached the letter to the commission's leave to appeal application and filed a supplementary petition with the Appellate Division, seeking a stay on the hearing at the four-member regular bench. The petition wanted the full bench of the Appellate Division to hear the leave to appeal at a deferred date.

The court yesterday asked Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed

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6 killed, 4 hurt as bus rams three-wheeler

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Six people were killed and four others injured, two of them critically, as a bus rams a three-wheeler vehicle yesterday near Baghopara Mazar in the town.

The dead are Swapna, 15, an SSC examinee, Rasheduzzaman Belal, 17, student of Bogra Azizul Haque College, Abdur Razzak, 30, driver of the three-wheeler, Majibur Rahman, 55, a pedestrian, Lily Rani, 30, and an unidentified man.

Sources said a Dhaka-bound bus hit the vehicle parked on the opposite lane while trying to swirl pass an elderly pedestrian crossing

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

9-yr low rainfall raises spectre of drought

PINAKI ROY

For the first time in nine years, Bangladesh is going through a drought-like situation as in the rest of South Asia.

"The country is experiencing almost 98 to 100 per cent shortfall of rain over the last four months. It is a drought meteorological condi-

tion but it might not be agricultural drought," said a top official at the metrology office in Dhaka.

Weather experts said such a situation would greatly hamper production of fruits including mango, lichee and other berries.

Though soil moisture is decreasing, it might not severely affect paddy production because of

irrigation, they noted.

This month there was only 52.4 millimetre (ml) rainfall against the normal 1,780 ml, leaving a shortfall of 1,727.6 ml. Only a little bit of rainfall occurred in Barisal and Gazipur. Last month, the country had 78ml rainfall while the normal for the month is 868 ml, according

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

JS BODY REVIEWS POWER CRISIS

Farming gets hardly one-fourth of need

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The parliamentary standing committee on power ministry yesterday expressed discontent over the deteriorating power situation and asked the Power Division to ensure adequate supply of electricity to the rural areas for irrigation.

The areas with Irri-boro con-

centration, particularly the northern districts, are getting one-third and in worst cases one-fourth of electricity needed in the peak hours, according to a REB report submitted to the committee.

"We are worried over the existing shortfall of power which is hampering irrigation. We asked the Power Division to supply adequate

power for smooth irrigation," Committee Chairman Shahidul Islam told reporters after a meeting of the committee.

"Farmers are putting pressure on us for the electricity crisis," he said.

The farmers yesterday continued to stage demonstrations

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Power-hungry farmers lay siege to MP's house, block road

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hundreds of farmers agitating for uninterrupted power supply for irrigating their Irri-boro lands laid a siege to the house of a lawmaker in Chapainawabganj and blocked a road in Jessore yesterday.

In Chapainawabganj, farmers from Palsa, Gobatala and Balladanga unions under Sadar upazila assembled at the district headquarters in the morning, took out a stick procession and laid a

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PHOTO: STAR

A child vendor sells ice creams kept in a thermo-flask as the scorching sun of Chaitra takes its toll on the land, drying it up and cracking the surface.

Announcement

Readers are invited to send in their views and comments on the CPD,



national election 2007," and the need to elect "clean candidates"

Prothom Alo and The Daily Star supported civil society initiative for an accountable development process in the context of the upcoming national elections. Your comments on "An accountable development process and the

should not exceed 500 words and will be published on the Op-ed pages of The Daily Star. Please send in your views and make your voice count in our democracy.

-Editor

RUPALI BANK PRIVATISATION Govt commits to 38pc job cut before sale

REJAU KARIM BYRON

The government has committed to potential foreign buyers of Rupali Bank that it would reduce 38 per cent of the existing workforce prior to sale of the bank.

Initially, employees of the state-owned bank, who are aged 50 or more with at least 20 years of service will be retrenched under Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS), the Privatisation

Commission committed to prospective buyers.

Rupali Bank sources said they have 5,008 employees and 1,852 of them are 50 and above.

The government has agreed to bear the expenditure for staff reduction in the form of the VRS, the sources said.

The commission held 'road shows' in Mumbai, Karachi, Kuala Lumpur, Dubai and London

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Kuwaiti NGO chief now in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Abdul Aziz Mal-ullah, country chief of Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS), an NGO believed to have been funding Islamist militants, is now on a visit to Bangladesh since March 21.

Aziz, a Kuwaiti citizen who seldom visits Bangladesh, has checked in a hotel in Banani in the capital. He was seen roaming the city sometimes in an expensive Pajero and sometimes on foot.

The cause of his visit could not be known immediately, but he was being watched by different intelligence agencies, sources said.

Kuwait-based NGO using funds despite govt ban

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Despite an embargo on its fund release due to alleged terror links, the Kuwait-based NGO Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS) is using bank accounts to run official work without the government's knowledge.

Sources said large amounts of money have recently been withdrawn by cheques from a joint

account of a private bank's Uttara branch in Dhaka to pay off RIHS officials and carry out construction work.

The account belongs to RIHS-run Kidney Dialysis Centre Director Zafar Musa Abu Moaz, an Iraqi national, and RIHS Bangladeshi Office Secretary Fazlur Rahman.

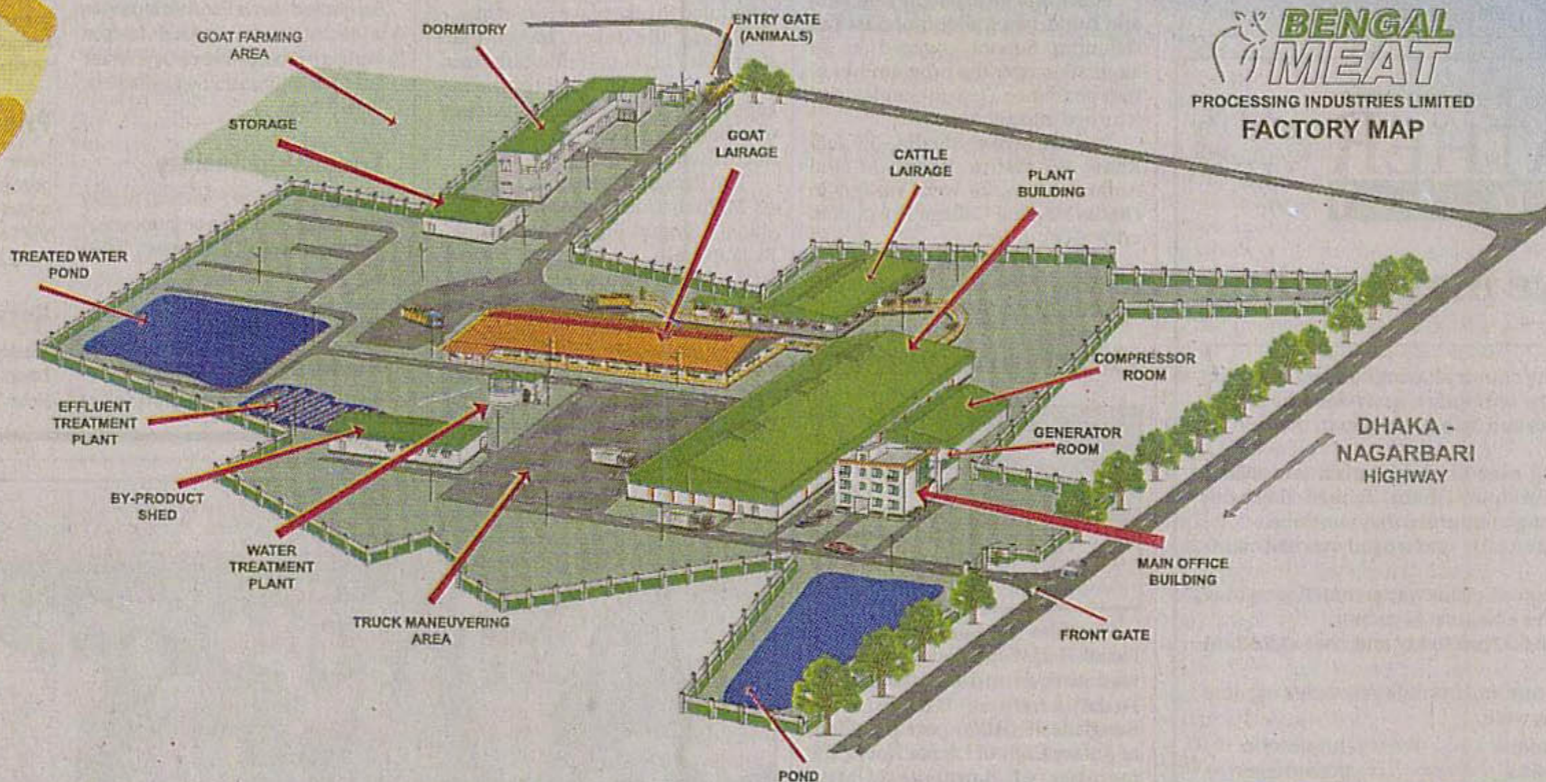
Though the sums were

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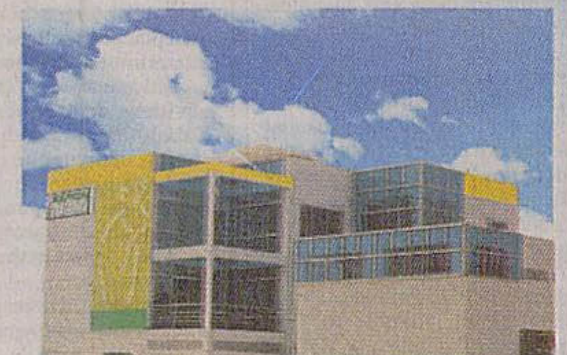
Bangladesh's single largest Meat Processing Plant



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