

25 lakh trees face axe for Phulbari mine

STAR REPORT

Implementation of Phulbari coal-mine project by British company Asia Energy will require felling of about 25 lakh big and small trees, forest department sources say. The trees in four upazilas — Phulbari, Parbatipur, Ghoraghat and Birampur— in Dinajpur will be axed in different phases of the 30-year life of the mine. Forest officials seeking anonymity told our Dinajpur correspondent that implementation of the mine project will also cause decline of groundwater level in the area, which may result in extinction of 3,200 acres of forestland adjacent to the coal mine area. There are a total of 17,344 acres of forestland with sal and other trees around the mine area. Of this, 3,200 acres are very close to the mine. The sources pointed out that in the mine area, there are about 50,000 trees planted 25 to 50 years

ago, while the remaining trees are younger. The older trees are of species like eucalyptus, shishu, neem and teak or mango, jackfruit, black berry and coconut trees or bamboo. These are roughly worth around Tk 150 crore. Some types of the trees provide fuel wood for the locality. Asia Energy officials in Dhaka however claimed that the number of trees to face the axe would hardly exceed eight lakh, if liberally calculated. The open pit mine will cover an area of 6,000 hectares, of which 350 hectares are covered by trees. "Each hectare of land has 1,000 to 1,500 trees of different sizes. This would mean there are about six to eight lakh trees in the mining area," said one official. "These trees will not be axed at one go. The mining will progress in phases. When mining in one part of the area is complete, miners will move to another location. The abandoned part of the mine will then

be rehabilitated for farming and reforestation," he explained. Phulbari coal mine will also require relocating around 4,70,000 people including 50,000 indigenous ones of about 100 villages, and part of Phulbari town. The departments of forest and environment last year gave environmental clearance to Asia Energy for the coal mine project. But many energy experts of the country term the project socially and environmentally hazardous. Under the coal development policy, 1993, the government will get only six percent royalties from AEC and different types of taxes. In terms of money, this will stand at \$200 million if AEC produces 15 million tonnes of coal a year. Asia Energy estimates that Phulbari reserve has 572 million tonnes of high quality coal, enough to generate 8,000 megawatt power

HC halts further construction of road through graveyard

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule asking the government to explain within four weeks why the decision to construct a road through Azimpur Graveyard will not be declared illegal. The court also issued a stay order on further construction of the road. A HC bench issued the rule on LGRD secretary, Dhaka city mayor, administrative officer and health

When road to DMCH is off limits

RAFIQ HASAN

It was about 4:45pm yesterday as I was passing Ramna Park through Minto Road. I was on my way to a very important assignment at Hotel Sheraton where the World Bank Country Director Christine Wallick was scheduled to address a news conference. Suddenly, I noticed a young woman calling me from the footpath. I looked at her and found that our colleague Monsura Hossain is sitting on the footpath with fresh blood gushing out of her nose.

SC stays DNA test on ex-DIG's wife, kids

UNB, Dhaka

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday stayed for a month the operation of a High Court (HC) order asking the ex-DIG of police to send his wife along with her septuplets to Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore for DNA test to prove the parentage of the babies. Chamber court of Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury passed the interim order upon an application filed by Alena Khan, executive director of Bangladesh Society for Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR).



The conjoined twins born yesterday afternoon have been kept at the gynaecology department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Conjoined twins born at DMCH

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MAHBUBA ZANNAT

A pair of female conjoined twins were born at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday who are joined at their chest and abdomen. The twins, weighing four kilograms, have separate heads, three legs and four hands, but single anus and genital. The doctors are yet to examine the internal organs of their body. Salma, 27, gave birth to the twins at about 12:35pm following a caesarean. She was admitted to the hospital on Sunday. The babies were taken to the Pediatric Surgery ward immediately after their birth where they have been kept on life support. Prof Kabirul Islam, head of the department of Pediatric Surgery told the Daily Star that conjoined twins are rare in Bangladesh and even in the world.



A 14-party mourning procession with a portrait of Awami League activist Mustafa Milon makes its way in the capital yesterday. Milon died in clashes between opposition activists and police in Dhaka on Sunday programme.

Inflation rate goes up

Non-economic factor blamed

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government's failure to dismantle the influence of traders' syndicates on the market and below target production of crops account for the current upward trend in inflation rate. The trend has resulted in spiralling prices of food items and decrease in those of non-food items, leaving the middle- and low-income group people to suffer. The last Bangladesh Bank quarterly (BB) report says, "Some non economic factors such as syndicated market control, as reported in the media, may have been responsible for the sustained high prices of daily essentials." Inflation rate on a point-to-point basis rose by .15 percentage point in May from the previous month this year. In case of food items, it rose by .63 percentage point while it came down by 0.56 percentage point for

non-food items. After a record inflation rate in November last year, it continued to drop in the next three months. But from March this year, it began to go upward again and till now is showing no sign to go into reverse. In March, the overall inflation rate rose by 0.45 percentage point from the previous month and in April it rose by 1.29 percentage point. In fiscal 06, the tagged production rate of crops was 3.02 crore metric tons whereas the total production was only 2.82 crore metric tons. The growth was only 6 percent more than FY 05 when crop production suffered badly due to devastating floods and was much less than what is normal. The import of different consumer items along with rice and wheat has decreased significantly, thereby adding to the rising inflation. According to the statistics on

opening of letter of credit (LC), import of consumer goods declined by 38 percent during July-March period in the last fiscal year from that during the corresponding period of FY05. Import of rice and wheat declined by 101 percent. BB sources added that besides lack of production and decline in import, the failure to contain the market syndicates are the main causes of price hike of essentials. In last budget, tax on per ton sugar was Tk 13,000 tax. It has come down to Tk 5,000 this year but there has not been any significant change in the price of sugar. Like before, sugar is selling at Tk 45-48 a kg. According to the TCB, which monitors price level in Dhaka market, the price of coarse rice yesterday was Tk 3-9 percent more than that on the corresponding day last year. The rise in prices of wheat was 8 percent, lentil 32 percent.

Bhuiyan doubts opposition's desire for polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday alleged that the opposition is creating confrontation intentionally by holding whimsical and violent programmes. "While we're only four months away from handing over power to the caretaker government, the opposition has become too impatient and is holding whimsical and violent programmes," he said

Prayer Timing		
July 4		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-10	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-55	7-00
Esha	8-17	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Massive promotions of deputy secretaries

153 become joint secretaries at one go

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday promoted 153 deputy secretaries to joint secretary superseding seniors and depriving around 100 eligible officials. Most of the promoted deputies belong to the 1982 batch while remaining others belong to other cadres and a few are leftovers of other batches.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia approved the list yesterday after the Superior Selection Board (SSB), the highest body to handle the promotion issues, submitted its recommendations. The selection of officials for promotion touched off commotion in the administration and a number of aspirants complained an influenced quarter handpicked

Chief whip hospitalised

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Whip Khondkar Delwar Hossain was admitted to the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) and Hospital with lung infection yesterday. The chief whip is undergoing "conservative" treatment under Prof Abdullah AL Shafi Majumdar in Coronary Care Unit (CCU) of the hospital, medical sources said. Prof Majumdar told the news agency that the chief whip is suffering from lung infection that also resulted in failure of the left ventricle of his heart.

Gaza groups set Israel deadline

Hamas office bombed again

AFP, Gaza City

Palestinian militants holding an Israeli soldier captive issued a 24-hour ultimatum yesterday for Israel to free prisoners after the army kept up its military assault on the Gaza Strip. But the demand was immediately rejected by Israel, which sent troops and tanks into northern Gaza on Monday and launched a sixth straight night of air raids to pressure the Palestinians into handing over the soldier. "Faced with the Zionist enemy's persistence in taking military measures and aggressions, we give it a delay expiring Tuesday, July 4 at

6:00 am (0300 GMT)," said a statement from three groups that seized the teenage conscript in an attack on an army post eight days ago. "If the enemy does not meet the demands we laid out in our previous statement... we will consider the matter closed and the enemy will be responsible for all results," said the statement from the Popular Resistance Committees, the armed wing of the ruling Hamas movement and the Army of Islam. The government of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, which has a force of 5,000 troops massed on the Gaza border, has so far rejected

Truce monitors asked to quit SL by Sept 1

Fresh violence kills 7

AFP, REUTERS, Kilinochchi/Colombo

Truce monitors from Denmark, Finland and Sweden must quit Sri Lanka by September 1, a top Tiger rebel told AFP yesterday, as fresh violence on the island nation left seven more dead. Some 37 out of 57 Scandinavian monitors from the three states cannot be considered neutral, after the EU put the Tigers on its list of banned terrorist groups in May, Tiger political wing leader S. P. Thamilselvan said. "September 1 must be the time frame by which they reconstitute" the monitoring mission, Thamilselvan said in an interview at his political headquarters of Kilinochchi, 330km north of Colombo.

In June, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) told peace broker Norway to get the EU monitors out within a month. The Tigers had agreed to extend the one-month deadline because Norway told them that during July "no concrete action could be taken in Europe because of the holidays... we realise they need some more time," Thamilselvan said. Asked what would happen if Norway was unable to remove EU monitors and reshape the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) by September 1, Thamilselvan said: "The question of the facilitators unable to meet the deadline does not apply because we have provided them with sufficient time." He said the European Union