

Biman flight triggers bomb scare at Kolkata

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, Kolkata

Indian security agencies yesterday found three unclaimed packets in a Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight from Chittagong to Kolkata carrying 67 people on board after it landed here amidst full emergency condition following an anonymous phone call that explosives have been planted in the plane.

"Three unclaimed packets were recovered during thorough search by security agencies inside the aircraft (BG-697) from Chittagong," Regional Executive Director of India's Airports Authority S P S Bakshi said.

He said the packets were sent to the cooling pit to examine if they contained explosives. The aircraft, Bakshi said, has been cleared to return to Dhaka after the search.

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JCD attacks Mannan's motorcade

12 BDB men hurt

A CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

At least 12 activists of Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) were injured when Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal activists attacked a motorcade of BDB General Secretary Major (retd) Abdul Mannan in front of Noakhali University College yesterday.

Witnesses said the JCD activists attacked the motorcade at about 2:00pm when Mannan along with his party activists were returning from MA Sattar High School near Majidee Court Railway Station after the inauguration of its newly-built building.

The JCD men beat up the BDB

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Protocol signed with US to avoid double taxation

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh and the United States on Monday signed a protocol to avoid double taxation and prevent income tax evasion.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, now on an official visit to the US, and Deputy Secretary of the US Department of Treasury Robert M Kimmitt signed the Protocol of Exchange of Instruments of Ratification of the Convention on behalf of their respective sides.

Earlier on September 26, 2004, Bangladesh and the US signed a convention to avoid double taxation and prevent income tax evasion.

With signing of the protocol, both the countries ended their three decades of negotiations for avoiding double taxation system.

At the signing ceremony, both Saifur and Kimmitt expressed satisfaction at the ratification of the convention after long negotiations, and mentioned that with the ratification of this convention, the

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Students lock IU offices, departments

Demand resumption of classes

STAR REPORT

Students of Islamic University (IU) yesterday locked all departments and offices of the institution demanding immediate resumption of their classes and examinations.

The offices and departments have been open in the last 20 days with very little work being done as the teachers started a non-cooperation movement against the acting vice-chancellor (VC) since July 19.

The students also threatened tougher programmes unless their demands were met.

The agitating students brought out a procession on the campus around 11:00am yesterday. At least 1,000 students took part in the procession.

They chanted slogans against the university administration of acting VC Anwarul Karim for his failure to resume the classes and examinations.

The students blockaded the roads on the campus and prevented all vehicles from playing. They also confined the teachers, officers and employees to their rooms for around four hours from 11:00am.

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CARETAKER GOVT

Depoliticising admin poses a challenge

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The next caretaker government will have to initiate a massive reshuffle to depoliticise the civil administration to ensure a level playing field for the upcoming election as a large-scale of promotions and appointments to key posts are allegedly being carried out by the present government on political considerations.

In wake of the prevailing situation in the civil administration, former advisers to caretaker governments think that the interim government

will face an uphill task to be done in a short time, the volume of which will exceed the records of previous caretaker governments.

With less than three months left of the BNP-led ruling alliance's tenure and for the approaching general election, the government has allegedly gone for large-scale promotions and appointments on 'political considerations' virtually turning the civil administration into a political administration.

Moreover, keeping the next election in mind, the government is now initiating various measures like

preparing a fitness list and waiting list for appointments to 700 posts related to election activities, ranging from the top level to field level administrations, sources said.

The measures will benefit the alliance government, as the next caretaker government will not be able to dismantle the freshly dissolved alliance government's comprehensive control on the administration. The removal of one official will only mean assumption of the post by another official loyal

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Inflation keeps rising despite tight monetary policy

REZAUL KARIM BYRON

Despite the central bank's tight monetary policy, inflation rate increased by 69 percentage point to 7.17 per cent on an average basis in the last fiscal year that ended in June.

During the FY05, inflation rate was 6.48 per cent.

This means the government missed both the inflation targets set in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and by the Bangladesh Bank (BB). The PRSP envisaged 6 per cent inflation while the BB set it at 7 per cent.

During FY06, food inflation reduced by 0.15 percentage point to

7.76 per cent while non-food inflation increased by 2.07 percentage points to 6.40 per cent.

Depreciation of taka against dollar, fuel price hike and increase in government borrowing resulted in the non-food inflation hike, BB officials added.

In FY06, taka lost its value by 9 per cent and fuel price was hiked twice. On top of it, the average lending rate increased by 0.75 per cent.

The rural people had a bit of relief in purchasing food as rural food inflation decreased by 0.37 percentage point during the fiscal year, but they had to pay more for other products as non-food inflation in the

rural areas increased by 2.63 percentage points. However, the overall rural inflation rate last fiscal year was 7.36 per cent compared to 6.62 per cent in FY05.

BB sources said the credit control mechanism did not work in curbing inflation as both public and private sector credit increased. Public sector credit clocked a year-on-year growth of 78 per cent while private sector 17 per cent.

However, inflation eased a little -- by 0.07 percentage point -- in June compared to May in the last fiscal.

Explaining the inflation trend, the BB in its monetary policy

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CPD trashes Bol chief's broadside

His remarks go against public decorum, personal decency, says Dr Debapriya

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) yesterday brushed aside the brazen remarks of the executive chairman of Board of Investment (BoI) that the think tank misinterpreted data from two international reports.

CPD said it only collected information from survey questionnaires and official statistics.

"The remarks of the BoI executive chairman that CPD is a shameless liar and a conspirator grossly violated the basic norms of public decorum and personal decency. We shall ignore all his crude and brash remarks on subjects beyond his competence as we feel embar-

rassed to discuss them," Debapriya Bhattacharya, executive director of CPD told a news briefing at the organisation's office in Dhaka.

CPD releases Global Competitiveness Report (GCR) by World Economic Forum and Least Developed Country (LDC) Report by Unctad on their behalf, and these two reports have been the subject of criticism by the executive chairman of BoI.

GCR is based on a mix of objective measures and stakeholders' perceptions, Debapriya said.

There is a marginal difference between GCR and Unctad's World Investment Report (WIR) regarding Bangladesh's ranking, he said

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CPD trustee board members shocked at Bol chief's remarks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Board of Trustees has termed the remarks of the executive chairman of Board of Investment (BoI) 'very unfortunate' and said he has no idea about the trustee members.

Executive Chairman of BoI Mahmudur Rahman on Sunday branded CPD as a 'conspirator and shameless liar' and blasted it for portraying a negative image of the country with 'political and purposive motive.' He also questioned patriotism of those who are involved with the CPD and share their views.

"We are very sorry for Mahmudur Rahman's comment in which he termed CPD a shameless liar. In fact, he has no idea as to who its trustee members are," CPD Trustee Member M Syeduzzaman told a press briefing at its office yesterday.

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PHOTO: STAR

Firemen, dodging power cables, try to rescue employees of different companies from a ten-storey building at Motijheel in the capital after a fire broke out there following an electrical short circuit yesterday.

VOTER LIST UPDATE

50pc work done in Dhaka as time limit ends tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Worried by the slow progress of updating the voter list in the capital, the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat yesterday assigned its 90 officials to expedite the task.

While the time limit for completion of the job expires tomorrow, only 50 per cent of it has been done in the last 19 days in the capital.

Progress of the task in the districts is 'satisfactory' but it is unlikely to be completed within the timeframe, EC officials said.

The EC is yet to extend the time limit. "A decision on extending the time limit will be taken on the day (August 10) it is due to expire," a senior EC official said.

The EC Secretariat at a meeting

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10 injured as high-rise catches fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A fire left around 20 people injured and trapped near three hundred people in a 10-storey commercial building at Motijheel in the capital yesterday.

The fire originated at around 4:00pm from the ground floor storeroom of Agrani Bank, Wapda Branch in Elal Chamber on 11 Motijheel.

The fire sparked from a blast of a power generator that was running after the power had gone off at 2:30pm, said several people who work in the building.

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Lebanon battle rages, UN struggles for truce

3 Israeli soldiers, 25 Hezbollah fighters killed in attacks

AFP, REUTERS, Beirut

Hezbollah fighters and Israeli ground troops battled in south Lebanon on Tuesday as diplomats struggled at the United Nations to find a workable resolution to end four weeks of bloodshed and destruction.

As Arab ministers prepared to address the Security Council on Lebanon's demands for changes to a draft resolution calling for a halt to the fighting, France voiced strong support for a rethink but the United States seemed more reluctant.

Paris, which with Washington co-sponsored the original draft, called for account to be taken of a Lebanese cabinet decision, endorsed by Hezbollah ministers, to deploy government troops to the international border in place of the

Shiite militant group.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said the idea was "interesting" but needed further study. Aides said they feared the proposal might be a "smokescreen" for Hezbollah to regroup.

Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora urged compatriots to prepare for a diplomatic fight even fiercer than the "steadfast" resistance to the Israelis put up by Hezbollah.

As the wrangling continued in New York, Israeli aircraft dropped leaflets over south Lebanon warning that they would fire on any vehicle that moved south of the Litani River, an area that includes the embattled port city of Tyre where aid officials say they fear a humanitarian crisis.

Three Israeli soldiers were killed

in separate clashes with Hezbollah in the border area, the military said. In one exchange near the village of Dabel, five soldiers were wounded.

Israel said 25 Hezbollah fighters had been killed but there was no immediate word from the militant group which has so far acknowledged a total of 53 dead.

Anti-tank missiles killed a soldier and wounded five near the town of Bint Jbeil, the Israeli army said. Al Arabiya television said two other Israeli soldiers had been killed.

Hezbollah said its fighters had destroyed an Israeli tank on the outskirts of the village of Ainata, causing casualties.

An air strike destroyed a three-storey school building in the village

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Rejoinder, our reply

The Ministry of Home Affairs has contradicted some information in a report headlined "Flawed machine readable passport scheme shelved: Ministry asks for re-tender on MRP, visa" published Sunday in The Daily Star.

The ministry said it has followed all the government procedures for the design, development and procurements for this programme. The whole programme, including machine readable passport and national identity card, was approved by the prime minister on October 16, 2004.

For the purpose of this programme under the revenue budget, the home ministry had also requested the finance ministry on February 1 for allocating Tk 50 crore in 2005-06 and Tk 290 crore in 2006-07 fiscal year, the ministry said.

Our reply

The Daily Star stands corrected on the fact that the prime minister's approval included the national identity card issue. Our confusion

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PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

WATERLOGGED... A woman operates a tubewell in knee-deep water as drinking water becomes scarce at Raripara of Tala upazila in Satkhira.

Marooned in cruel waters

Vast swath of land in 3 districts becomes waterlogged as river beds get silted up

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Around five lakh people remain marooned as the local rivers and beels keep overflowing their banks inundating thousands of houses across a vast area spread over six upazilas of Jessore, Khulna and Satkhira districts.

As days pass, the conditions grow even grimmer for the locals. Many of them said they could hardly manage one meal a day.

In some villages, not a piece of dry land is left for the people to bury or cremate their dear ones. Tripti Rani Bairagi of Bajje Kullia village at Monirampur said about a month ago, they had to drown a neighbour's body in Beel Bakar, failing to cremate her.

The parents have to keep their children tied up at night so that they do not fall into the water.

Several thousand houses on 80,000 hectares of land are now under ankle-to-knee-deep water.

In total, around two lakh hectares of land remain waterlogged and the number of affected people is around 12 lakh, according to Water Committee, a local civil society forum campaigning for measures to solve the problem of persistent waterlogging.

Waterlogging began to plague the area in 1987-88 as riverbeds rose alarmingly due to growing siltation. It gets extensive during the rains when rivers and badly silted beels flow over their banks with almost no natural channel left for the water to drain away.

The waterlogging poses threat also to the ecology as

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RMG workers clash with factory officials

10 injured

JU CORRESPONDENT

Several thousand workers of SG Vicus (BD) Ltd at Dhaka Export Processing Zone (DEPZ) in Ashulia clashed with the factory officials yesterday morning and injured at least ten including the managing director and the factory manager.

The workers were agitated over the alleged confinement of six female workers by factory authorities on Monday night on charges of theft of Tk 50,000 from the salary fund.

The agitating workers refrained from work yesterday in protest at the factory officials' alleged offensive action toward the female workers and demanded removal of the managing director of the factory.

Around 4,500 workers attacked factory officials including the managing director, confined all officials inside the factory and locked up the factory entrance.

The MD, the manager and eight female workers were injured after the workers' protest turned violent and they clashed with the officials.

The DEPZ General Manager AZ

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