

TENDER INTERFERENCE  
9 JCD men's bid for bail denied

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday again rejected the bail petitions of nine Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leaders and activists arrested for preventing participants from bidding in a tender at the Construction Maintenance Management Unit (CMMU) of the health ministry on July 30.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mir Ali Reza of the Speedy Trial Court-6 passed the order following separate bail petitions filed by the defence lawyers.

The court also directed the authorities concerned to publish an advertisement in a national daily asking two fugitives - Asaduzzaman Asad and AKM Azad Swadhin - to appear before it to face trial.

Earlier, the same court had rejected the bail petitions of the accused three saying that the arrestees were caught red-handed from the spot while they were creating obstacles for the tender bidders from buying schedules.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) on August 10 pressed charges against 11 Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leaders and activists.

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# New burst of agitation if minimum wage not declared immediately

Warn RMG workers' leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The garment workers' leaders at a discussion yesterday warned of a repetition of the outburst of workers' anger any time if the minimum wage for the sector is not declared immediately.

They reiterated their earlier demand for fixing Tk 3,000 as the minimum wage while the garment owners declined to accept the demand saying that it would bring disaster in the sector, leading to closing down of almost 75 per cent factories within six months.

Accusing the garment owners of 'killing time' to avoid the minimum wage issue, the workers' leaders said although the owners committed to implement the other clauses of the tripartite agreement within one month, 90 per cent issues still remain unresolved.

As per the agreement signed on

June 12, the cases against the leaders of garment workers were to be withdrawn but it has not been done, they said, adding that owners have continued torture and harassment on them.

The garments owners, on the other hand, said they are ready to implement the tripartite agreement but more time is needed for a viable solution. They warned of a disaster in the sector if any 'unilateral decision' is imposed on them.

Independent think tank Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) organised the discussion on 'Fixing minimum wage in the garment sector and working atmosphere' at Cirdap auditorium.

CPD Executive Director Debapriya Bhattacharya moderated the discussion.

Khondoker Golam Moazzem and Fahmdia Khatun jointly presented a research paper on the

subject. "If Tk 3,000 is fixed as the minimum basic salary, 75 per cent garment factories will be closed within six months," said Annisul Huq, former president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and a member of the wage board that the government formed to settle the issue of garment workers' minimum wage.

The capacity of the garment owners declined significantly over the years with the massive fall in cutting and making (CM) charge from the buyers, he said.

The workers should consider the capacity of the owners and the minimum wage should be fixed considering all the aspects in over four thousand garment factories in the country, he said.

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SYDNEY 'BOMB PLOT'  
Pak-born architect jailed for 20 years

AFP, Sydney

A Pakistan-born architect accused of plotting a "jihad" or holy war bombing campaign in Australia was sentenced to 20 years in jail yesterday.

Faheem Khalid Lodhi, 36, was convicted of planning to blow up the electrical grid in Australia's biggest city, Sydney.

Supreme Court judge Anthony Whealy said the attack, if carried out, would "instil terror into members of the public so that they could never again feel free from the threat of bombing attacks within Australia."

Lodhi, who denied four counts of preparing to commit a terrorist act, bowed his head but showed no other emotion as he heard the sentence.

He had faced a possible life sentence as one of the first to be convicted under tough laws passed after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States.

Prime Minister John Howard refused to comment directly on the sentence, but told reporters: "The

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Leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh meet Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday to vent their opposition against deposed president HM Ershad's joining the four-party alliance.

PHOTO: PID

POWER PLANT REHABILITATION

# Govt not interested in \$40m conditional loans

SHARIEF KHAN

To put a stop to financial misappropriation on the pretext of old power plant rehabilitation, the power ministry has chosen not to accept offers of two soft loans worth 40 million US dollars from Czechoslovakia and Italy.

State Minister for Power Anwarul Kabir Talukder told The Daily Star last week that finding soft loans for power projects has become extremely difficult for Bangladesh in the recent years, but

at the same time, the country cannot afford to take conditional loans, which are designed to drain out a huge sum of money without delivering actual products.

"We don't want conditional loans which do not serve our purpose. We want a loan that we can use for new power schemes or for rehabilitation schemes that we really need," the state minister said.

The Czech government offered 22 million dollars in conditional soft loan for rehabilitation of two old

Czech power plants the Khulna 60 mw and 110 mw plants built in 1973 and 1984 respectively by a Czech government company, Skodaexport. These plants are now generating maximum of 50 mw and 85 mw respectively. The condition for the loan demands that only Skodaexport will undertake the rehabilitation project from next year.

The Italian government on the other hand offered 18 million dollars or Tk 123 crore for a Tk 170

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PM tells rally of dev work

UNB, Chhatak, Sunamganj

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday urged people to vote for the BNP-led alliance in the upcoming general elections to complete the development work initiated by her government.

"We will hand over power to caretaker government after two months and elections will be held in time. Take a correct decision and vote for the BNP-led coalition," she told a public meeting at Chhatak High School ground.

Khaleda said the BNP is pursuing politics of development and welfare of the people while the Awami League (AL) is engaged in politics of chaos.

In her 20-minute speech, the prime minister listed development

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PHOTO: STAR

Left fallow due to scant rainfall even in the monsoon, this cultivable land on the outskirts of Bogra town is now a grazing land. The photo was taken yesterday.

Bigots block roads to stop setting up of digital screen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bigots yesterday blockaded the busy Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue for over 15 minutes protesting the installation of an advertisement screen adjacent to a mosque, that created a traffic tailback stretching up to Uttara.

At around 2:00pm, about 150 zealots from the Kanwan Bazar Ambar Shah mosque and madrasa came down to the street chanting slogans against the construction of a television screen, saying that 'it was a conspiracy to attack Islam.'

The officer-in-charge of Tejgaon Police Station desperately tried to

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# 'Indian' held over Pak terror bid

AFP, Karachi

A suspected Indian national stole a railway engine in Pakistan's southern city of Karachi and tried to drive it into a passenger train in an attempted terror attack, police said yesterday.

The man drove the locomotive at full speed for 35 kilometres (22 miles) before officials managed to derail it and avert a possible disaster late Tuesday, railway police official Irshad Beg said.

Police identified the suspected Indian as Madan Lal, who is in his 50s. "We suspect that he stole the engine and drove it on the track to cause a terrorist attack," Beg said.

Lal's apparent target was a

regular passenger service that was on the same track before it was diverted, he added. Two Pakistani men, a driver and a fireman, were also arrested for negligence.

Lal told AFP in custody that he was a Pakistani and stole the engine just to have a ride on the track. He refused to answer most questions.

Beg said the suspect would be produced before a local court and a thorough medical examination may be conducted to determine his mental health.

"He does not have anything to prove that he is a Pakistani citizen and we suspect him to be from the Indian state of Hyderabad," the policeman said.

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Rajuk moves to evict Gulshan Lake grabbers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) yesterday forced the owner of a lakeside plot in Gulshan to remove the structure he had built by illegally extending the original plot, following a story published in The Daily Star.

Rajuk officials also posted five of its uniformed security guards in front of the Plot-9 in Road-31 where several labourers were seen dismantling the tin-shed structure

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GRASSROOTS LEVEL MEET WINDS UP

# AL settles candidature dispute in 200 JS seats

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina's view exchange meeting with the grassroots level leaders since June 3 has been able to settle intra-party feuds in about 200 constituencies for candidature in the next parliament elections, party sources said.

Concluding the two and a half month long view exchange meeting with the party's grassroots level leaders except those from Dhaka district, Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon them to work in favour of the party nominees forgetting all previous enmity to ensure victory in the coming general elections scheduled for early 2007.

The AL chief arranged the view exchange meetings with leaders from the district, upazila, thana and municipality units to select candi-

dates from hundreds of party leaders aspiring candidature for the next general elections scheduled for early 2007.

She will exchange views with the Dhaka district leaders soon, sources said.

The meetings also aimed at knowing about the local leaders' complaints and suggestions to strengthen the party activities to ensure victory in the next elections and getting clear scenarios on the prevailing political situation, the party's preparations for the elections as well as the ongoing anti-government movements.

Long-standing intra-party conflicts at the party's grassroots level and lack of coordination among the top local leaders might pave the way to another debacle for the AL in the forthcoming parliamentary elections if stern organisational actions are

not taken immediately, grassroots leaders said in the meetings.

With the increase of nomination aspirants in most constituencies, trend to establish supremacy at the local level, lack of communication between the central and grassroots leaders and lack of political activities of the top post holders at the local levels have augmented the long-standing conflicts among the top local leaders, they told Hasina.

The grassroots leaders urged Hasina to take effective measures to solve the internal problems and nominate candidates, who are popular, have mass contacts, and active in AL politics to ensure victory in the elections.

Warning the grass-roots leaders of organisational action against those who would go against the

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PHOTO: STAR

Rajuk workers remove structures built by encroachers on the eastern bank of Gulshan Lake in Dhaka yesterday, following a report of The Daily Star on filling up of the lake with rubbish.

Prayer Timing		
August 24		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-30	5-05
Zorh	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-33	6-36
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation