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NOTICE

The offices of The Daily Star will remain closed on the occasion of holy Eid-e-Miladunnabi today. There will, therefore, be no issue of the paper tomorrow.

NEWS BRIEFS

IDB chief due Aug 24

President of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Osama Jaafar Faquh will arrive in Dhaka on Wednesday on a three-day visit to Bangladesh. The Finance Ministry sources said in Dhaka yesterday. During his visit, the IDB president will sign two credit agreements of the bank given to Bangladesh, reports BSS.

Hasina visits Sabbir

Awami League president and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina went to see Ruman Bin Wali Sabbir, captain of the Mohammedan Sporting Club and a national team player, now being treated at a local clinic. Sabbir suffered a serious injury on Wednesday during a match of the Star Premier Football League. Hasina enquired about his treatment and consoled his parents there, reports UNB.

3 pirates held

CHITTAGONG, Aug 20: Three alleged pirates were arrested from Shikalbaha under Bandar Thana here in the early hours today, police sources said. They are Nôor Mohammad, Fayez Ahmed and Mohammad Ali. UNB.

ADP implementation for '93-94 claimed at 94 pc

By Staff Correspondent

The implementation rate of the country's Annual Development Programme (ADP) last year showed a big leap to 94 per cent of the revised outlay, the highest level achieved so far.

Of the Tk 9600 crore revised ADP, Tk 8983 crore was utilised during fiscal 1993-94, according to the ADP implementation report of the Planning Commission.

The ADP implementation rate was 86 per cent in fiscal 1990-91, then it dipped to 84 per cent in 1991-92 and further to 81 per cent in 1992-93 causing an alarm among the planners as to how to stop this trend.

This year's leap of about 13 per cent, therefore, made the government upbeat because it had been facing serious criticism from the donors for its incapability to implement the ADP.

"This better performance was possible because last year, we had implemented a number of recommendations of the Planning Commission in solving the problem of slow implementation," State Minister for Planning, Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan, told a press briefing at the auditorium of the National Economic Council (NEC).

"We had given more administrative and financial power to the project directors, ear-

marked funds for land acquisition — a major hurdle in implementing development works — and had taken institutional measures in three tiers," the state minister said.

The Prime Minister had projectwise meetings with the line ministries, the Finance Minister reviewed the progress constantly and the Planning Ministry worked round the clock to improve fund utilisation," Dr Khan explained.

During the fiscal 1993-94, the country also witnessed a higher amount of taka allocation than project aid outlay. The Taka portion was Tk 5240 crore, 55 per cent of the re-

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Eight problems impede project implementation

By Staff Correspondent

The Planning Ministry has identified at least eight problems that impede project implementation.

The ministry, in its ADP implementation report for fiscal 1993-94, said delay in mobilising project aid, signing agreements and effecting them is still hampering implementation of the ADP.

The report also noted that approving and finalising a project concept paper (PCP) at ministerial level still take a long time. The PCPs often contain incorrect information resulting in delay in approval of projects. The report suggested training of personnel engaged in PCP formulation to resolve this problem.

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200 feared drowned in launch capsizes

From Our Correspondent

Chandpur. The launch capsized in strong currents while taking a turn to berth at the local terminal.

"It happened all of a sudden. The launch, attempting a turn, leaned on its side and started sinking," witnesses said.

The Chandpur river traffic police, stationed near the terminal, immediately rushed to the spot and helped rescue some 60 passengers. Of them, 20 were injured. Five of them were admitted to the Chandpur Sadar Hospital.

The district administration began a search for the sunken launch from the evening, with

the help of mechanised and country boats, but had failed to find any trace of the ill fated vessel.

The administration sources informed this correspondent that the salvage vessel MV Hamza of the Inland Water Transport Authority (IWTA) had left Barisal at 4 pm and was expected to reach Chandpur before midnight.

The sources estimate that the launch is lying some 400 feet deep on the river bed. The salvage operation will begin tomorrow morning.

Meanwhile, fire service sources in Dhaka told The Daily Star over telephone last

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Chairperson of the National Economic Council (NEC) and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia presiding over the review meeting of the NEC at its auditorium in the city yesterday. — PID photo

Political impasse to end by month-end, hopes BNP

Star Report

The ruling party secretary general yesterday expressed cautious optimism about a dialogue between the government and the Opposition at the highest level for resolving the present political impasse by the end of this month.

"A process has begun and if it goes on well, there can be a dialogue between Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina," Abdus Salam Talukder said.

"We have in our mind organising such a dialogue as the last resort," Talukder told a group of newsmen at the BNP office.

"We are trying to create an atmosphere for a dialogue. You will get a result by August 30," he said.

The BNP secretary general, however, declined to elaborate and to disclose the names of the Opposition leaders with whom he held initial talks.

Chief Whip of the Opposi-

sition Mohammad Nasim told this correspondent that the opposition parties were ready to hold talks if the ruling party leaders came forward with an "open mind."

"He said he had informal talks with Chief Whip of parliament Khandaker Delwar Hossain but no tangible progress was made."

"We just shared our personal concern," Nasim said.

"In reply to a question whether the ruling party would discuss the caretaker issue during the planned dialogue, the BNP leader said, "We will discuss the overall situation now prevailing in the political arena."

He hoped the fifth Parliament would complete its term and the Opposition would join its session, beginning August 30.

Talukder pointed out that his party still opposes the idea of a caretaker government for holding elections.

Miladunnabi today

By Staff Correspondent

Holy Eid-e-Miladunnabi, the day of the birth and passing away of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM), will be observed throughout the country today with due solemnity and religious fervour.

"Born in Mecca, some 1400 years ago, Prophet Muhammad (SM) spread the message of peace, brotherhood and humanity."

The day will be marked by milad mahfils, Quran khwani, discussion meetings, seminars and religious processions.

The day is a public holiday. The President, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have issued separate messages on the occasion, asking the countrymen to follow the ideals and teachings of the Holy Prophet.

The government, educational institutions, financial, religious and socio-cultural organisations have drawn up elaborate programmes to observe the day.

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Fate of Haripur oil uncertain

From Iqbal Siddiquee

SYLHET, Aug 19: The fate of the country's lone oil well at Haripur now seems to be uncertain.

Production of crude oil from the well located at Haripur gas field has remained suspended for 50 days due to coagulation of wax in the extraction pipe. Production could not, however, be resumed even after completion of dewatering of the pipe which took 28 days by a Singapore firm.

Official sources said that production of crude had to be stopped since July 1 following coagulation of wax in the oil pipe. A technician from a Singapore firm was engaged for dewatering the pipe from July 18 and the work was completed on August 13. Some experts said that the situation

had been caused by the negligence of the technical personnel engaged in the production process.

The oil-well was discovered on December 23, 1996. The discovery opened a new horizon of hope as regards exploration of mineral oil in the country. At the initial stage, production was 500 to 550 barrels a day.

The production marked a sharp fall in November-December last year and stood at 70 to 80 barrels a day due to coagulation of wax in the pipe. The authorities then stopped production since July 1 this year. Though the higher authorities were informed of the matter immediately, no step was taken to overcome the crisis, it is alleged.

Some sources alleged that the routine dewatering of oil pipe was not done due to unknown reasons.

Some official sources, on condition of anonymity, said that the gradual fall in the production due to fall in the well pressure indicated exhaustion of oil reserve in the present layer. Rise in the water pressure at the present production layer had caused this. The local authorities would now observe the situation for a week or a fortnight to take a decision. They may propose to convert the oil well into a gas well, the sources said.

The well had a reserve of about 8.2 million barrels of which seven lakh barrels has been extracted, the sources added.

Bengali settlers' lands in CHT being given to tribals?

By Staff Correspondent

The Bengali-speaking settlers in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) have alleged that the lands allotted to them in 1979 were now being given to the tribal refugees.

"We want proper rehabilitation and resettlement of the returnee refugees but they are being given some lands owned by the Bangalees," said the president of the Bangalee Krishak Samik Kalyan Parishad (BKSAP) S M Rezaul Karim Belal.

Addressing a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday, he said that the Bengali settlers had valid documents for those lands but the refugees on their return claimed those were their lands. Other BKSAP leaders were present at the press conference.

Belal said that some 150 families settled in Dighinala thana under Khagrachhari district, who are now residing in cluster villages for security reasons, are the victims of such reallocation of lands.

The BKSAP president urged the higher authorities to stop such practice. Otherwise, it might create problem in future, he added.

The BKSAP put forward a seven-point demands including resettlement of the Bengali speaking people in the lands allotted them in 1979, waiving of loan up to Tk 10,000, adequate civic amenities in the

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JP divided over strategy to free Ershad

By Asiuzzaman

The Jatiya Party leadership is sharply divided over a strategy to free its jailed leader H M Ershad, party sources said yesterday.

One group is in favour of negotiations with the government to free Ershad on parole but the other group wants to gear up the agitation for the release of Ershad.

The party presidium may discuss the issue today.

"If Ershad is given a conditional parole to attend Parliament session then all the 35 JP MPs should attend the session," a party leader said.

"In such a situation, the on-going agitation of the opposition parties for a caretaker government will weaken. This

will also create a major rift in the opposition camp," he said.

"The ruling party would be forced to release Ershad," said a source in the group opposing negotiations.

"Release on parole would be undignified for the party chief," he said.

The other group said if the party pursues the strategy of agitation to free Ershad, it would prolong his jail life.

They said that accepting parole might help getting bail for Ershad.

A well-informed source said the party's acting chief Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury is in favour of continuing the agitation to force the government

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PDB suspends project as India supplies poor quality poles

The Power Development Board (PDB) has suspended a component of an IDA-funded project due to supply of poor quality of electric poles by the Indian supplier, reports UNB.

Sources in the PDB said the erection of poles under its Tk 280 crore "Sixteen Town Power Distribution Project" remained held up from August 13 due to the quality of poles "not upto specification standard".

The Indian supplier has been asked to immediately replace the poles. Some 15,000 out of the total order of 24,000 poles have already reached the country.

The PDB awarded the Tk 15 crore contract for the supply of galvanised steel and

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BHP strikes deal for coal

By Staff Correspondent

BHP Minerals, a US-Australian multinational, yesterday signed an agreement with the government to explore and extract coal in the northern region of the country. The company will be allowed to explore in areas outside those sites where coal deposits have already been found.

BHP thus became the first foreign company to invest in mineral exploration and extraction activities in the country.

The agreement was signed yesterday afternoon at the Bangladesh Secretariat by the Director of the Bureau of

Mineral Development (BMD) M Muminullah and BHP Vice President Oliver N Warin on behalf of their respective sides.

Official sources said that under the agreement, BHP Minerals will explore coal at three sites covering a total area of 14000 hectares in four districts — Dinajpur, Rangpur, Jaipurhat and Bogra.

About 400 million US dollars will be invested in the project by BHP, in phases, while the Bangladesh government will have no financial involvement.

The BHP Minerals, one of the biggest of such companies,

is now engaged in exploration and mining activities in about 50 countries.

Since 1986 the company has been showing an interest in coal exploration in Bangladesh and submitted specific proposals to the government that year. However, it took the authorities until January last year to decide whether to allow such a venture.

Yesterday's agreement stipulates that should BHP find coal in the three designated areas, the company would be allowed to develop the mines and continue extraction.

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Rajuk's model town project hits snag

By Nazmul Ashraf

The Purbanchal Model Town Project (PMTTP) of the Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha (Rajuk) at Ruppaganj of Narayanganj has hit a snag because a section of land owners is obstructing the acquisition of land earmarked for the purpose, according to official sources.

In a bid to remove the deadlock, the district administration of Narayanganj has issued a notification asking the land-owners to lodge complaints with it in this regard, sources at the Rajuk said. The agitating owners were dem-

anding compensation more than the authorities had offered them.

A Rajuk official said that the local leaders of an opposition political party were organising a section of the land owners including some fake ones to oppose the project. Because of such a situation, the signing of an agreement between the Rajuk and the affected people was being delayed, he added.

A minister has taken up the responsibility of settling the issue with the land owners, the official said.

Deputy Town Planner of the

Rajuk Kazi Golam Faruk told The Daily Star they were ready to give due compensation to the affected people as per land laws, pay prices on the spot and rehabilitate them.

The PMTTP, which was earlier named Yusufganj Model Town Project, was initiated a decade ago with a study of its feasibility. But the process of its implementation began only last year when the government ordered the acquisition of land.

The project is being implemented on 6,000 acres of land. A total of 28,000 plots of

two categories — residential and commercial — will be developed in the model town.

Besides, there will be plots for setting up educational institutions and medicare and recreation centres. Both the low and high income groups of people will be given plots. The distribution of plots is likely to start next year to be completed in six to eight years, sources said.

The model town will accommodate some 16 lakh people of different professions, a source said.

Malaysian woman gets bail

By Court Correspondent

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) yesterday granted bail to Ong Siew Pin, the Malaysian businesswoman, who was arrested at the Zia International Airport on August 9.

Pin surrendered before the CMM's court and was granted bail for a surety of Tk 50,000.

Customs officials arrested the Malaysian woman at ZIA on charges of illegally carrying 20,000 US dollars and 10800 Malaysian ringgits while she was about to leave the country.

Advocate Shamim Hasnain moved the bail petition on behalf of Ong Siew Pin.

Tk 93.15 cr BRDB project for poor, destitute women

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) has taken up a project worth Tk 93.15 crore for the development of destitute women and the poor for the year 1994-95.

The project, approved under the Rural Development-12, would provide loans for 33 types of activities including poultry farming, fisheries, livestock, nursery and small trading.

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Announcement

The Daily Star Special Supplement on Banking will now be published on Thursday, August 25, instead of Saturday, August 20, 1994.

This supplement will contain exclusive interviews of the Minister for Finance M Saifur Rahman and Governor of Bangladesh Bank and will also carry write-ups from MDs of private and nationalised Banks of the country.

Worthwhile contributions from our readers, patrons and experts will be accepted for publication in this issue till 2 pm, Tuesday, August 23, 1994.

Inconveniences caused to our esteemed patrons for the delay are regretted.

Management