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NEWS BRIEFS

BNPPP meets tomorrow

The parliamentary party meeting of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) will be held tomorrow at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban at 5 pm. All BNP MPs have been requested to attend the meeting on time, said a press release yesterday, reports UNB.

Khaleda shocked

BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday expressed deep shock at the loss of lives and property in devastating fire in city's two garments factories on Monday. In a condolence message, she prayed for salvation of the departed souls and conveyed sympathy to the members of the bereaved families. Begum Zia wished the injured workers early recovery. Meanwhile, the BNP chairperson visited the two garments factories last night and talked to some of the affected people, reports UNB.

US envoy meets CEC

US Ambassador David N Merrill yesterday called on Chief Election Commissioner Mohammad Abu Hena at the Election Commission Secretariat in the city. An EC press release said. During the meeting the US ambassador congratulated the Chief Election Commissioner for holding a smooth, free, neutral and transparent election in the country, reports BSS.

Two bodies recovered

By Staff Correspondent
Police recovered two bodies in the city yesterday. Tejgaon police recovered the body of an unidentified male, aged about 30, from the lake near the North Plaza of the Sangsad Bhaban at around 10:30 am, police said.
There were marks of injuries over the body which was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue for autopsy.
Police also recovered the body of an unidentified male, aged about 35, from a ditch at Dhanmondi yesterday morning. The body was sent to the DMCH for autopsy, police said.

Body to work on pay commission soon Ministers won't head JS committees: Hasina

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday categorically said that the parliamentary committees would not be headed by ministers for the sake of ensuring transparency of her government, reports UNB.

"There was opposition to this decision from ourselves, but I decided to do so," the Prime Minister said while addressing secretaries and other senior government officials at a meeting at the Bangladesh Secretariat yesterday morning. She said the main objective of her government would be to bring about economic emancipation and improve the condition of the people.

"You are accountable to the people. People are the owner of this Republic and you are their servants. You are the officials of the republic and do not belong to any party," she told the meeting.

Recalling their role in establishing people's voting rights, the Prime Minister said, "People could vote freely for your role during the movement."

"I, on behalf of my government, assure you that we will not politicise the administration. You had been victimised, harassed and repressed in the past, but my government will not do so."

Hasina said merit and efficiency would only be the yardstick for promotion and transfer of government officials and sought their all-out cooperation in implementing her pledges to improve the lot of the people.

The Prime Minister assured the officials of her government's initiative to introduce rules of business for a better working atmosphere. She also assured that her government

Hasina thanks Khaleda

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday thanked Begum Khaleda Zia and her Bangladesh Nationalist Party for congratulating her on assuming the office of Prime Minister, reports UNB.

In reply to the BNP chairperson's congratulatory letter, the Prime Minister also sought all-out cooperation of Begum Zia and her party in running the state affairs on the basis of national consensus.

She wished Begum Zia, the former prime minister, good health.

would give special attention to ensure that the government officials work with freedom and dignity.

Referring to the country's shattered economy, the Prime Minister stressed the need for attracting foreign investment for which, she said, improvement of law and order is the vital precondition.

She also asked the officials to simplify the investment procedure.

Hasina said her government would give thrust on the education sector and on curbing terrorism. "Side by side we will have to create employment opportunity for the unemployed youths," she said.

"Everything would be futile and holding this post (Prime

Minister) will have no meaning if we fail to improve the present condition of common people," she said.

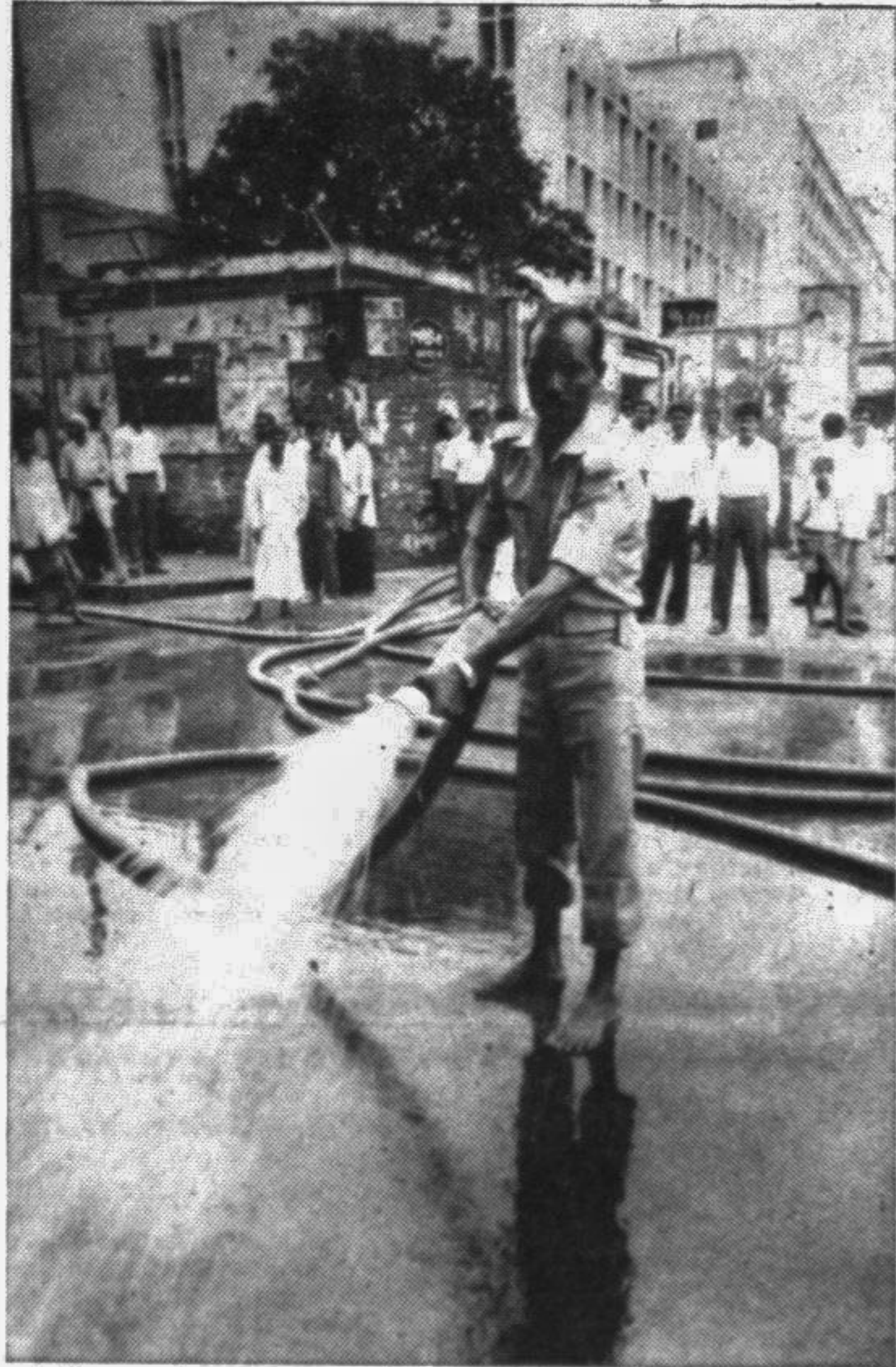
"You are the key to running the government," Hasina said seeking their cooperation in building up the country.

Earlier, Cabinet Secretary Ayubur Rahman congratulated Sheikh Hasina on her assumption of the office of Prime Minister and assured all-out cooperation in running the government.

The Cabinet Secretary said better rapport between the political leadership and the administration will help reach the desired goal.

A number of secretaries pointed out various problems

See Page 12 col 6



A fire service man pumping out stagnant rain water from inside the Bangladesh Secretariat yesterday. — Star photo

No new minister likely before JS session

By Reaz Ahmad

Expansion of the council of ministers is unlikely before the first session of the seventh Jatiya Sangsad, according to official sources.

The first session of Parliament may begin in the second week of July, the sources said.

But the Prime Minister has not yet requested the President to summon the new parliament into session, sources in the PM's Secretariat and the Parliament Secretariat told The Daily Star yesterday.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission announced yesterday that election to the 30 reserved seats for women in the parliament will be held on July 7.

A minister, when contacted last night, confirmed to this correspondent that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina did not yet discuss with senior party leaders and her cabinet

See Page 12 Col 3

Garments fire: Probe body formed

By Staff Correspondent

The Fire Service and Civil Defence department formed a three-member committee yesterday to investigate into the fire incident in two garments factories at Mirpur in the city in which at least 11 workers were killed in stamped and due to suffocation Monday afternoon.

The committee headed by Deputy Director of the department AYM Hashmat Ullah has been asked to submit its report within a week, according to fire service sources.

Meanwhile, police searched the premises of the affected garments factories — Trimode France Ltd. and Suxent Fashion Ltd. located in the top four floors of the six-storied building of Sofura Khatun Super Market. There was no report of any more death in the incident till last night, police source said.

Of the 11 victims, eight were identified as Siraj, 16; Morium, 30; Mahmuda, 40; Monwara, 15; Shima, 15; Helena 20; Monwara Begum, 17 and Parvin, 20.

Their bodies were handed over to their relatives after autopsy at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday afternoon, hospital sources said. The bodies of three others identified as Nazma, 25; Runa, 22, and Flora, 28 — were lying at the DMCH till last night.

One of the injured in the See Page 12 col 5

JSD Ganobahini-BCP rivalry in Jhenaidah Five killed in gunbattles, one slaughtered

From Our Correspondent

Debinagar and Mokshedpur in Khoksha thana and Baruria in Saikrupa thana, they said.

The gunbattle lasted about three hours from 11 am. Police and villagers said the two groups exchanged at least 150 rounds of fire.

Police recovered the body of Moslem from Debinagar and three other bodies from Baruria and Mokshedpur. The three killed on the spot were identified as Kagal (21) and Zia (45) and Haider (22).

Another injured, Monirul (22), later succumbed to injuries at the Kushtia General Hospital.

Villagers said two other bodies were washed away by the Goral water. They also said there could be more casualties, but that could not be known as the injured went into hiding.

Five more people were injured in another gunfight between the activists of ruling Awami League and opposition BNP at village Taminagar in Shaiklupa thana following a minor incident.

Bullet-hit Sirajul, Nabiruddin, Amirul, Hakim and Mohidul were admitted to hospital. Police arrested two AL activists — Morshed and Mamun — in this connection.

BNP to revamp party, build new leadership

By Nazmul Ashraf

BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia is planning to revamp the party following its failure to win the June 12 parliamentary election, sources close to her said.

The main thrust of the plan will be on bringing about new leadership in different tiers, from the central executive committee down to the thana-level committees, the sources said adding "a change in the post of secretary general is almost certain."

The plan of the former 3 BNP MPs allege attacks on workers by AL activists

BNP leaders yesterday alleged the ruling Awami League had started repression on the leaders and activists of its political rivals throughout the country, reports UNB.

Briefing newsmen at the party's Kakrai office, the BNP leaders said the new Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, was uttering sweet words everyday, but in reality her government began hitting out at her political opponents.

BNP members of parliament Mashiur Rahman, Shamsuzzaman Duda and Salahuddin Ahmed said Awami League workers continued attacks on the BNP men and those who voted BNP, under the very See Page 12 col 7

prime minister is prompted by widespread dissatisfaction in the party's rank and file who are holding a section of the BNP's central leadership responsible for its defeat in the election.

The issue of reorganising the party and reactivating the workers were discussed in recent meetings of the newly elected MPs and the Standing Committee on the party earlier this week.

The matter is also expected to be discussed in the BNP Parliamentary Party meeting shortly, the sources said adding that the party's National Executive Committee would take the final decision to this effect. However, the executive committee is unlikely to meet before the new parliament goes into its first session, likely early next month.

In their post-election discussions, a section of the party leaders and workers were very critical of some former ministers for their "corruption and anti-party activities" which damaged the party's image to a large extent and led it to the electoral defeat, the sources said.

Under the plan, said competent party sources, Begum Zia is expected to bring about major changes in the party's hierarchy. A new secretary general may be chosen and the party units across the country See Page 12 Col 1

Launch with 200 passengers sinks in Barisal

BARISAL, June 25: A launch, carrying some 200 passengers, capsized in Nilganj river at Aramganj ghat in Kalapara thana this morning, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the overloaded launch, ML Suktra, was heading towards Khepura from Khaprapara and sank at about 9 am. Most of the passengers, however, swam ashore.

But a few passengers, mainly women and children, were feared drowned.

Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir new secy to PM

By Staff Correspondent

Dr. Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Member of the Planning Commission, yesterday joined as Secretary to the Prime Minister, sources at the PM's office said.

Former Secretary to the Prime Minister Abdullah Harun Pasha has joined as the Education Secretary while Hasnat Abdul Hye who was serving as Education Secretary is due to join the Planning Commission as Member.

AK Fazlul Ahad, Deputy Secretary in the Cultural Ministry, also joined the PM's office yesterday as Private Secretary-1 while Rabul Alam Obaidul Mukhtar Chowdhury who was senior Assistant Secretary of the IFAD Project in the Cabinet Division, joined as Private Secretary-2.

The Prime Minister is expected to appoint a Press Secretary and is considering the names of at least four leading journalists for appointment to the position.

Foreign ship damaged at Ctg port

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 25: A Maltese flag carrying vessel, MV Blue North partially sank in the Karnaphuli river this morning after it had hit and damaged the KAFCO jetty while entering the Chittagong port for unloading cement.

According to port officials, the ship met with the accident at 6 am due to heavy current and engine trouble.

The ship also suffered damage.

MV Blue North arrived from China carrying 23,000 metric tons of cement and it was scheduled to unload 10,000 metric tons of cement at the Chittagong port and the rest at Mongla.

Port officials said steps are underway to salvage the vessel. The tug and mooring boat of the Chittagong port and the See Page 12 Col 4

Election to reserved seats for women on July 7

The election to the 30 reserved seats of the Jatiya Sangsad for women will be held on July 7, the Election Commission announced yesterday through a gazette notification, reports BSS.

According to the schedule, nomination papers will be received by the Returning Officer on July 3 from 9 am to 4 pm at the Election Commission Secretariat here. The scrutiny of the nomination papers will take place the same day.

The last date for withdrawal of nominations has been fixed on July 4 and the polling will take place at the conference room of the Election Commission Secretariat on July 7 from 8 am to 4 pm without any break.

As per the Constitution, women members are elected through direct voting of the members of parliament elected in the general election.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission in a separate gazette notification appointed Additional Secretary of the Election Commission Secre-

tariat, M A Mannan as Returning Officer and Deputy Secretary Badruddoza Sarker as Assistant Returning Officer under Section 6 of the Representation of the People Order. It also appointed three polling officers.

The Election Commission earlier divided the whole country into 30 regions for

AL invites applications

The Bangladesh Awami League parliamentary board yesterday invited applications for nomination in 30 reserved women's seats in parliament, a party press release said in the city last night, reports BSS.

Intending candidates have been requested to collect prescribed application form from the party's central office at Bangabandhu Avenue from today at a cost of Taka 500 and submit after properly filling it up along with photograph and Taka 5000 by 5 pm on June 28.

election to the 30 reserved women seats under the Representation of People Order, 1973.

The regions are: Woman seat-1. Panchagarh, Tahkurganj and Dinajpur districts, 2. Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat and Rangpur districts, 3. Kurigram and Gaibandha districts, 4. Joypurhat and Bogra, 5. Sirajganj and Pabna districts, 6. Nawabganj and Rajshahi districts, 7. Noaganga and Natore districts, 8. Kushtia, Meherpur and Chuadanga districts, 9. Jhenaidah, Narail and Magura districts, 10. Jessore and Satkhira districts, 11. Bagherhat and Khulna districts, 12. Patuakhali, Barguna, and Bala districts, 13. Barisal, Jhalakhati and Propur districts, 14. Tangail district, 15. Jamalpur and Sherpur districts, 16. Mymensingh district, 17. Netrokona and Kishoreganj districts, 18. Manikganj and Dohar, Nawabganj, Keraniganj, Savar and Dhamrai thanas of Dhaka district, 19. Dhaka district without Dohar, Nawab-

See Page 12 col 7

Six killed in Comilla road accidents

COMILLA, June 25: Six people were killed and 10 others injured, four of them critically, in two highway accidents in the district today, reports UNB.

Police said five people were killed and four injured when a Hajiganj-bound microbus from Dhaka collided with a bus coming from Kachua at Boalia in Baruria thana on the Dhaka-Chandpur road at 11 am.

Three unidentified passengers of the microbus died on the spot while two others — Dilara Begum, 28, and Alamgir Hossain, 25 — succumbed to their injuries at the Comilla Medical College Hospital.

Four wounded passengers were sent to PG Hospital in Dhaka in critical condition. They are Shaiful Alam Pathan, 37; Moniruzzaman, 25; Sharmin Farzana, 6, and Shahab Uddin, 30.

In another accident, one person was killed and six others were injured when their Nababpur-bound bus overturned at Tirpa bazar near cantonment on the Comilla-Brahmanbaria road at about 4 pm.

The dead was identified as Jahangir Hossain.

Housing defeats greenery

By Morshed Ali Khan

A chunk of lake-side green space at Dhanmondi in the city is being used for construction of housing units by the Ministry of Works to accommodate government officials.

Construction work on more than one bigha of land at the end of Road No. 5 has already started. The Public Works Department (PWD) under the Ministry of Works has also paved a 16-foot wide road on the green space, connecting the housing units.

The decision to construct two five-storied buildings consisting of five units each on the green space has sparked off resentment among residents and different local organisations.

"Instead of improving the lake and its surrounding areas, the authorities have now cast their eyes on the green space along the lake", regretted Ma-

mun, a young resident of Road No. 6.

In August, 1995, the PWD started filling a part of the lake at the end of Road No. 5 to construct housing units for officials. The PWD had to abandon the project at that time as residents vehemently opposed the move and turned back the trucks carrying soil.

Later in the same year, Dhaka WASA set up a pump house on the green space beside the lake on the northern side of Road No. 7 mosque. WASA authorities later admitted that there was no prior authorisation from the PWD (owner of the land) for this. The pump-house is now in operation.

The housing units now under construction will accommodate senior officials of the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, said a

senior engineer of the PWD. Each building will be constructed on 1,500 square feet and the remaining space will be used for parking and other facilities, he said.

"As far as I can see there will be no problem for the residents of the area if these buildings are constructed," said the engineer adding that the PWD had to evict illegal occupants from the site before going for the construction.

"The decision to construct housing units there was taken at very high level meetings, which were attended by advisers in the caretaker government," he said.

A resident of Road No. 15 said, "Look at the condition of other parts of the lake and its green space. Some officials of the PWD itself is running a basti (slum) at the end of Road See Page 12 col 8



Under-construction housing units on lake-side green space at Dhanmondi in the city. — Star photo

Ctg-Cox's Bazar road link yet to be restored

From Our Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, June 25: The road link between Chittagong and Cox's Bazar was not restored even after four days.

The road communication remained cut-off since Saturday morning as three bailey bridges collapsed due to heavy onrush of flood water.

Although two of the bridges have already been rebuilt but the one at Engaon, Kotakhali is yet to be repaired.

Hundreds of vehicles remained stranded at both sides of the bridge.

Prices of some essential commodities at Cox's Bazar went up due to disruption of road communication. There are also reports of dacoity in the stranded buses and trucks. The Arakan Highway Sramik Union in a statement said that the dacoits have looted valuables of the passengers.