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Salvage operation at Magurchhara fire site begins

From Iqbal Siddique
MAGURCHHARA, (Srimangal), June 24: Salvage operation around the Magurchhara drilling site began today.
Terry Spears, hydrocarbon expert of the Occidental, who was supervising the salvage operation at the site, told The Daily Star, "The fire will die down automatically."
During a visit to the spot this correspondent found that police and ansars were deployed around the drilling site. But
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BNP's demonstration at thana, dist hqs tomorrow

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday asked the activists of the party and its front organisations across the country to stage demonstration on June 26 against the new budget, reports UNB.
Rallies and processions will be held at thana and district headquarters to protest the "anti-people budget" and fertilizer price-hike and to press for the withdrawal of all surcharge and other taxloads.
BNP Chairperson and Opposition Leader Begum Khaleda Zia will address a public meeting at Manikganj Govt Debendra College ground at 3 pm on the day.
The BNP announced the countrywide demonstration on June 22, threatening that anti-government action programme would be launched this week if the demands were not met.

Ministers shouldn't visit Manikganj-3 Constituency: EC

Election Commission (EC) has suggested that the ministers, state ministers, deputy ministers or the persons enjoying the same status should not visit the Manikganj-3 constituency, officially or unofficially, till completion of the bypolls, reports UNB.
The EC made the suggestion to keep all the activities relating to the byelection, scheduled for June 30, above controversy, said an official handout yesterday.

Law commission urged to update '61 Navy Act

By Staff Correspondent
A request has been made to the Law Commission by the Naval Headquarters for updating the Bangladesh Navy Act, 1961, according to official sources.
The erstwhile Pakistan Navy Act, 1961 was converted into Bangladesh Navy Act by a Presidential Order after the independence.
"We are examining the law," said a well placed source in the Law Commission without giving further.

Pabna Poura bypolls 5 file nominations for chairmanship

From Our Correspondent
PABNA, June 24: Five candidates submitted nomination papers to the Returning Officer today for contesting the forthcoming by-election for the post of chairman of Pabna Pourasabha.
The by-election will be held on July 14.
Those who submitted nomination
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Khaleda warns at Manikganj rally Movement to oust govt if byelection rigged

MANIKGANJ, June 24: Leader of the Opposition Begum Khaleda Zia today warned of a movement to topple the government if it tries to rig the Manikganj byelection scheduled for June 30, reports UNB.
The BNP chairperson said if the government tried to rig the election, tamper result of the polling or indulge in any other manipulation, her party would launch such a movement as will compel the government to quit.
She was addressing a huge public meeting at Satura High School ground in the afternoon. It was organised by district BNP in support of the party candidate in the byelection, Abdul Wahab Khan.
"I've come here to meet you with a demand... the demand for your valuable vote... I always consider you as my close kins... So I've the right to make this demand," Begum Zia told the cheering people amidst clappings.
Referring to the price hike of fertilizer, she said the government claims that it is sympathetic towards the farmers while it raised the price of agricultural inputs, although it does not provide any bank loan.
"Farmers are deprived of loans, because the banks are empty... the government harasses and jails the farmers for only Tk 2000 outstanding loan," she alleged.
The Leader of the Opposition said the government was destroying the country and its people through its misuse and conspiracies. "This is the character of the government. It cannot be trusted."
Presided over by opposition Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain, the meeting was also addressed by BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Tariqul Islam, Selima Rahman, Mirza Abbas, Gayeswar Chandra Roy, Barrister Ziaur Rahman Khan MP, Sirajul Islam Selim, Dr Salahuddin MP, Goutam Chakrabarty MP and BNP candidate for Manikganj-3 seat Advocate Abdul Wahab Khan.
Listing out of her government's various development and nation building projects
See Page 12 Col 8



Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia addressing an election projection rally in Manikganj yesterday. — Star photo

Donors concerned at subsidies to SOEs

Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria has reiterated the government's firm commitment to administrative, economic and legal reforms, reports UNB.
He was speaking at a meeting with donors' representatives in the city yesterday to exchange views on the economic reforms undertaken by the government.
The Finance Minister said the government has recently appointed a new chairman for Administrative Reform Commission with the rank of a cabinet minister.
A successful businessman has also been appointed the Chairman of the Privatisation Board with the rank of a state minister for further strengthening the functions of Privatisation Board.
The government had earlier set up a permanent Law Reform Commission, a Banking Reform Committee, a Local Government Commission and an Agriculture Commission, he said.
He said the government is finalising the process to hold elections for Gram Parishad and Union Parishad by September next.
Kibria said the government has initiated a technical assistance project with the assistance of the World Bank to conduct a study for recommending various measures to restructure the commercial banks.
As part of the financial sector reforms, the government is presently preparing a non-bank financial sector project for IDA assistance, he said.
Referring to the measures undertaken in energy sector, the Finance Minister said the government has signed three agreements for barge-mounted power stations, each with a 100 MW capacity.
Plans for the Meghnaghat combined cycle power project and the Haripur power project are also being finalised.
Kibria sought cooperation and support of the donors for the success of the next Aid group meeting to be held in Dhaka November 3-4 following an investment forum which will follow.
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Rape attempt Constable sent to jail hajat in Dinajpur

From Our Correspondent
RANGPUR, June 24: A constable of Champotoli police barrack under Cherribander thana in Dinajpur district allegedly caught and tried to violate a young girl near her house at Hashimpur village in the early hours of yesterday.
Jaba Sultana, a student of class VI, raised a hue and cry when constable Abul Kalam Azad tried to rape her when she
See Page 12 Col 4

No decision yet on FFs quota Results of 17th BCS exam may be delayed

By Aminul Islam
Announcement of final results of the 17th BCS examination is likely to be delayed as the authorities are yet to reach a decision on the 30 per cent quota, reserved for the wards of freedom fighters, according to sources in the Public Service Commission (PSC).
The 30 per cent quota which was earlier reserved for the freedom fighters has now been reserved for the wards of the freedom fighters by a government order.
Sources in the PSC said they have sought advice from the government as to how the posts will be filled up, as the provision did not exist when applications for the examinations were invited in 1995.
The results could be published within one month after getting government's clearance about the reserved quota, the source said.
A high powered committee headed by the cabinet secretary was formed Monday last to take measures to identify the wards of freedom fighters so that they can avail the opportunity of 30 per cent reserved quota in the government, semi-government and autonomous organisations.
Under the existing system, 45 per cent appointments are made on the basis of merit and 55 per cent quota for different districts. Of the 55 per cent, 30 per cent goes to the candidates who are freedom fighters, 10 per cent to women and 5 per cent to the tribal people.
The PSC in its annual report published recently suggested abolition of the 30 per cent quota system for freedom fighters.
See Page 12 Col 8

4 burnt alive in microbus in Chittagong

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, June 24: Four persons, including two women, were burnt alive and seven others seriously injured when a microbus and a dead body caught fire carrying them in Colonelhat area of Pahartoli on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway Monday night.
The dead were identified as Rono Das, 9, Putul Rani Das, 40, Niati Rani Dhar, 40, and Nipul Kanti Dey, 18.
The injured were admitted to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital and clinics.
Police said, the microbus on way to Bhatiyari from a clinic at Panchnala skidded off the road when the driver lost control of the vehicle and caught fire immediately killing the four occupants and also burning the dead body.
The seven other occupants who were rescued by the local people were rushed to the hospital and private clinics.
The bodies were sent to the CMCH for autopsy and later handed over to their relatives for funeral.
The driver of the bus has fled. A case was filed with Pahartoli police.

JS budget discussion Concocted statistics, says BNP: AL terms constructive

Opposition MPs yesterday complained that concocted statistics were produced in the budget, saying that it will encourage investment and economic growth, protect local industries and reduce poverty.
Some opposition members alleged that Finance Minister S A M S Kibria framed the 1997-98 budget to protect the interest of the Indian economy.
Refuting the allegations, the treasury bench members hailed the budget, saying that it will encourage investment and economic growth, protect local industries and reduce poverty.
In all 27 members took part in the discussion spread over two sittings till 10 pm.
M K Anwar said the proposed budget lacked directive and did not even fulfill the election pledges of the ruling Awami League. "Going through the budget it seems that the government has lost control over the country's economy," he said.
The former BNP minister termed the budget anti-people, saying that statistics given in the budget were not true. People have rejected the budget, he observed.
Anwar said the 5.7 per cent GDP growth shown in the 1996-97 budget was also not true. He said favourable climate helped a bumper harvest of crops this year which alone took the credit for 6 per cent growth of GDP while growth in other sectors was the lowest in last one decade.
Jamaat leader Delwar Hossain Sayeedi termed the budget tax-laden and said new taxes would exceed Tk 1,500 crore, which he said was not clearly stated in proposed budget.
State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury criticised the opposition for not making any constructive discussion on the national budget.
See Page 12 Col 3

JS question hour Steps taken to recover overdue loans, bring discipline: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said her government has taken a number of measures to bring back discipline in the banking sector and activate the bank loan recovery drive, reports UNB.
"The measures would leave far-reaching impacts on the overall financial sector, including the banking system. The amount of default loan is already reducing," she said during the PM's question-hour in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.
Replying to Mirza Azam (AL-Jamalpur), Hasina said the banks had faced a liquidity crisis during the last days of BNP government due to increased credit disbursement at a time when the deposits were falling.
Exports marked reduction while the constructive environment for investment disrupted. The banks faced increased burden of overdue as the credit discipline was obstructed, she said.
After taking power, she said, the government has declared
See Page 12 Col 7

JS phone exchange Bureaucratic tangle blamed for delay

By Staff Correspondent
Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim yesterday said that bureaucratic tangle in the administration was obstructing democratic governance in the country.
"We believe in accountability and are obliged to resolve any problem faced by the honourable members of parliament," he said in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.
Explaining the delay in replacing the outdated telephone exchange at Shere Bangla Nagar, covering the JS area, the minister said, a move to install a 1000-line new exchange was halted by the Sangsad Secretariat on the plea of maintaining the official process.
Operated by the telecommunication
See Page 12 Col 2

Nazmul Huda tells JS Five AL MPs hold dual citizenship

As many as five MPs of ruling Awami League hold dual citizenship, a senior opposition member said in parliament last night, reports UNB.
Taking part in budget discussion, former Information Minister Nazmul Huda disclosed their names.
He said Dr Mohammad Selim, Syed Ashrafur Islam and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury have UK citizenship, and Sheikh Helal Uddin and AK Faezul Huq Babu are holding US citizenship.
Barrister Huda came up with this disclosure in reference to the case pending in the High Court regarding the US citizenship of BNP MP ANM Ehsanul Huq Milon.
Kuwait to provide Tk 34 cr for rural electrification
A loan agreement was signed in the city yesterday between the Bangladesh government and Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) for rural electrification in Nilphamari district, reports UNB.
Under the agreement, KFAED will provide US dollar 7.8 million equivalent to Tk 34 crore for the project called Area Coverage Rural Electrification phase IV D.
Mohammad Anwar Hossain, Joint Secretary of ERD, signed the agreement on behalf of the government while Hesham Al-Waqani, Deputy Director General (Operation and Disbursement) and leader of the Kuwait Fund Mission, signed on behalf of KFAED.
The project envisages construction of 900 kms new electric lines, renovation of 200 kms existing electric lines, installation of 3 Nos sub-stations and 13,500 consumer connection for households, irrigation and light rural industries in Nilphamari.

Commentary The PM has faced the public, now the Leader of the Opposition should

By Mahfuz Anam
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina deserves our sincere thanks and hearty congratulations for subjecting herself to direct and searching questions from the civic society, live on television, watched by millions throughout the country. Even though some may find faults with the substance of her answers yet the fact that she faced a torrent of hard hitting questions with dignity and patience and tried to answer them with sincerity speaks volumes of her wish to be answerable to the public.
The programme was completely free from any interference from any quarters — either her government or her party. The panelists framed their questions totally on their own and no attempt was made to plant questions from the audience or through the phone lines. This is clearly borne out by the fact that not a single question was asked which, far from being flattering, was not even soft on the PM.
We must remember that no head of the government in the history of Bangladesh has ever submitted himself or herself to anything near what Sheikh Hasina submitted herself to last Monday.
As a citizen I felt empowered that our Prime Minister was brought to our reach and made to address our daily concerns. As a journalist I felt proud that the electronic media, which is always used for the most shameful propaganda of the most vile type, suddenly transformed itself from the mouthpiece of the ruler to the conveyor of the feelings and sentiments of the ruled. And, as a panelist I felt privileged that I was given an opportunity to present some of deepest concerns of the people — as I understood them — to our highest elected leader, and that I was able to counter her answers with counter questions to clarify what I thought needed to be clarified.
As for the Prime Minister, it was a far more matured, experienced, and self-controlled Sheikh Hasina who faced the
See Page 12 Col 3

JS snippets

By Nazmul Ashraf
"Horried by the suddenness of the incident, I assumed I was under gun attack by the Treasury Bench members," said BNP lawmaker Abdul Mannan while reacting yesterday to Monday's incident of a bulb exploding inside the House and the debris falling near his chair.
A bulb from a high-voltage overhead lamp cluster hanging from the dome-shaped roof of the main chamber of parliament suddenly exploded during Monday's sitting and fell between the chairs of Mannan and Jamaat-e-Islami MP Delwar Hossain Saidee.
At the beginning of yesterday's morning sitting of the Jatiya Sangsad, an enraged Saidee rose to protest a report carried by a vernacular daily saying that a bulb inside the House fell on his head the day before.
"In fact, the hanging bulb fell near my chair, not on my head," he clarified and blasted the reporter concerned for writing on the incident in a distorted way.
Demanding immediate checking of all the hanging bulbs installed long ago, Saidee warned, "Otherwise, recurrence of such accident may severely harm any important person like the prime minister."
The Speaker announced that the incident will be probed.
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Surplus electricity in Ctg Accord to set up new transmission line

By Staff Correspondent
The Power Development Board (PDB) yesterday signed a turn-key contract with a German company, ABB Energieanlagenbau GmbH, to set up a 230 kV transmission line from Comilla to Chittagong, it was officially announced.
The 151 km transmission line will allow the PDB to transfer surplus power to other parts of the country from Chittagong region. The line will have the capacity to transfer 350 mw of power to the desired areas.
The present Comilla-Chittagong transmission line can not take the load of such power transfer.
The double circuit transmission line will cost Tk 297 crore with a foreign exchange component of Tk 186 crore.
KfW of Germany will provide the foreign exchange component in the form of a grant of DM 85 million. Fitchner of Germany is the foreign consultant of the project.
The project is expected to be completed within 20 months of signing the agreement.
The contract was signed by Habibur Rahman Jamali, Secretary of the PDB, and Horst Peters of ABB.
As per the contract, ABB will install the conductors, steel towers and upgrade corresponding sub-stations.
Sources in the PPB said that ABB had already mobilised its construction team in Bangladesh and has started soil investigation for the project.
This transmission line has become important in the context of the second unit of the 210 mw Rajon power plant, expected to go into operation next month. PDB sources said that the second unit will enable the PDB to have excess power in Chittagong region which will be
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Jamuna signs accord with Mobil to market lube oil

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, June 24: Jamuna Oil Company Ltd today signed an agreement with a US-based oil company Mobil for blending, marketing of Mobil brand lube oil and supply of Mobil brand marine lube oil to ocean-going ships, officials said.
S S Giasuddin Ahmed, general manager of Jamuna Oil Company, and Daniel P McDermott of Mobil, signed the
See Page 12 Col 8

DCC's food testing lab likely to remain shut for 6 months

By Morshed Ali Khan
equipment. But the official said it would take more than six months to move to the new premises and start work.
The DCC's public health laboratory and its inspectors are assigned to make random checks on food items at hotels, restaurants and food manufacturing plants, and prosecute the culprits. It is the only authorised body to do the job in the city. "The Institute of Public Health (IPH) does tests for the rest of the country, but the city's responsibility is on us," said a DCC health department official.
A top DCC official, who wished to remain anonymous, alleged that the engineering section had always opposed the idea of moving the laboratory to Nagar Bhaban. "For the last four years we tried in vain to bring the lab from old town. Now that we are here they want
The Dhaka City Corporation's public health laboratory is likely to remain shut for at least another six months, laboratory sources said.
The laboratory — the only official centre for testing quality of food in the city — has remained inoperative since it was shifted from its old premises at Luxmibazar to Nagar Bhaban more than two months ago.
Food testing equipment and furniture — packed in jute sacks and boxes — is strewn around the two rooms of the laboratory's new premises. Its technical staff leave around and gossip over cups of tea.
A top DCC official said two floors of DCC's environment building, situated near Banga Bazar, have been provided to set up the lab. Tk 20 lakh has also been earmarked to revamp the lab, replacing its obsolete
Now that we are here they want
The project envisages construction of 900 kms new electric lines, renovation of 200 kms existing electric lines, installation of 3 Nos sub-stations and 13,500 consumer connection for households, irrigation and light rural industries in Nilphamari.

Sarbaharaman held after gunbattle with police

SIRAJGANJ, June 24: In a pre-dawn swoop on a village in Tarash thana, police arrested a member of the outlawed Sarbahara Party after a brief gunbattle, reports UNB.
Acting on a tip-off, a police team, led by Si Tipu Sultan, raided Talam village at about 3 am to arrest a gang of outlaws.
Sensing the police arrival, the outlaws opened fire on the cops, leading to a gunfight. Police, however, arrested the gang leader Abdul Mannan from the scene.