

Manikganj bypolls

Restriction on movement of vehicles from midnight tonight

Movement of motorcycle, babytaxi, microbus, jeep, pickup, mechanised boat and speed-boat has been banned for 54 hours in Manikganj-3 constituency where by-election will be held on June 30, reports UNB.

The ban will be effective from midnight tonight to 6 am on July 1, said an Election Commission (EC) press release.

The restriction will, however, not be applicable for the vehicles playing on the Dhaka-Aricha highway that runs through the constituency.

Vehicles carrying contesting candidates, valid identity card holders, election agents, local and foreign journalists, observers, election officials and employees, and law enforcers will also be exempted from the restriction.

Besides, ambulance and other vehicles engaged in emergency services like fire service, electricity and gas, will remain outside the purview of the ban.

See Page 12 Col 7

AL urges admin to play neutral role in bypolls

AL president member Abdul Mannan MP, yesterday said, his party will protect the hard-earned democracy and franchise of people at any cost, reports BSS.

Mannan was addressing a series of roadside rallies as part of Awami League's election campaign in Manikganj-3 constituency.

He urged all concerned including the administration to play a neutral role in the forthcoming election. He said, those who rigged polls in the past are planning to do so again and engagin themselves in conspiracy.

Mannan urged the people to vote for the AL candidate to uphold the image of the country and to ensure the flow of development.

Awami League leaders Mukul Bose, Alamgir Komkum, Siddiqur Rouf Khan, Prof Faizul Huq, party candidate Alhaj Col. (retired) Abdul Malek also spoke at the rallies.

Dhaka reaffirms support to Palestinians

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has reaffirmed Bangladesh's unreserved support and total commitment for the just cause of the Palestinian people's right to a separate independent homeland, reports UNB.

In a message on the occasion of 30th anniversary of the illegal occupation of the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif (Jerusalem), she regretted that Israel had kept the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif under its illegal occupation since June 28, 1967.

Hasina condemned the annexation of the holy city by Israel and the illegal measures and practices such as confiscation of land and property, establishment of Jewish settlements, demolition of Palestinian homes, profanation of Islamic and Christian holy places, and obstruction of the freedom of worship.

She also condemned execution of excavation works, opening of tunnels, withdrawal of identity documents from the Palestinian inhabitants of Al-Quds. Isolation of the city from Arab environment and imposition

See Page 12 Col 5

Inside Today

Article

PM Faces Public: Hallmark and Landmark

Column : Beneath the Surface

by Abdul Bayes

Page 4

Star Literature

The evolution of contemporary art in Pakistan; Never the twain shall meet; and From the pages of history

Page 6 & 7

Business

DSE index loses 74 points in 4 weeks: Lack of money supply; institutional buying makes share market dull

Page 8



Baul songs being presented at the Shilpakala Academy in the city on the fourth day yesterday of the National Folklore Festival. — Star photo by Sk Enamul Haq

PCJSS fronts split over proposed peace deal

By Shehab Ahmed and Nurul Alam

Cracks are appearing in the front organisations of the Parbatva Chattagram Janasanghati Samity (PCJSS), the political wing of the Shantibahini.

But the militants threw their lot with the hardliners in Shantibahini who are sceptical about the talks between the government and the PCJSS, which received a fresh impetus after the Awami League government revived the peace negotiations, reconstituting the National Committee on Chittagong Hill Tracts (NCCHT) in October last year.

Chief Whip of Parliament Abul Hasnat Abdullah heads the committee while the PCJSS team is led by its supremo Jayatirindriyo Boulipriyo Larma alias Shantu Larma.

They announced on May 14 in Dhaka after four days of intensive negotiations that they agreed on signing a peace accord

Gasfield fire
Statements by contractors contradictory

By Mizan Ali

The inquiry committee formed by the government to investigate the causes of the explosion leading to a fire at the Magurchhara drilling site found 'contradictions' in the statements given by various contractors involved in the drilling, according to sources close to the committee.

Officials of the US company Occidental Ltd., which was awarded the contract for exploration of hydrocarbon, when contacted at their office in Dhaka declined to make any comment in this regard.

See Page 12 Col 1

Train service in Sylhet to resume soon

From Iqbal Siddiquee SYLHET, June 27: The authorities of Bangladesh Railway are yet to take a decision on resumption of train service in Srimangal-Sylhet section.

When contacted, railway officials now staying at Srimangal said tonight that, repair work on the 1500-metre damaged portion of rail track had been done and a goods train was put on a trial run on the track.

The authorities are hopeful of resuming the train service within a day or two, an official said. But officials of Occidental were not allowing resumption of the service immediately, he said. The Occidental was suggesting experimental running of goods trains for at least two

See Page 12 Col 7

Countrywide SKOP strike on July 30

The Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP), an alliance of labour bodies, will enforce 24-hour countrywide strike on July 30 to press home its eight-point demand, reports UNB.

The agitational programme was finalised at a meeting of SKOP leaders in the city yesterday following the recommendations of June 25 national convention.

The planned strike would be preceded by other action

See Page 12 Col 5

ODA loan package Japan to give Tk 578cr for three projects

Bangladesh will receive 15,252 billion yen, equivalent to Tk 587 crore from Japan under the ODA Loan Package '97

for implementation of three important projects in the country, reports UNB.

An agreement to this effect was signed in Dhaka yesterday morning.

The projects to be financed under the loan assistance are: Jamuna Bridge Access Roads Project (Tk 235 crore), Paksey Bridge Construction Project phase 1 (Tk 330 crore), and Narayanganj-Narsingdi Flood Protection and Irrigation Project (Engineering Services) Tk 13 crore.

On the basis of the engineering service executed by Japanese loan in 1995, the government of Japan has decided to provide a loan for the construction of Paksey Bridge (phase 1) in the current fiscal.

Officials said the loan assistance would carry an interest of one per cent per annum with a repayment period of 30 years, including a grace period of 10 years. The procurement on the

projects is generally untied. The Jamuna Bridge Access Roads Project is designed to upgrade the conditions of about 67 kilometres road between Joydepur and Tangail by improving the road alignment, widening the road and bridges, and strengthening the pavement.

The main purpose of this project is to cope with the drastic increase of traffic expected after the completion of Jamuna Multi-purpose Bridge, scheduled for June 1998, thereby ensuring smooth flow of increasing transportation between Dhaka and the areas west of Jamuna river.

Sharif and one Monir were arrested for their alleged trespass on the Prime Minister's Secretariat compound on June 13. He died on June 16 after he was granted bail by the court.

A sub-inspector of Tejgaon thana, Sakhawat, was suspended and closed to Rajbari police line after a murder case was filed by police in connection with the death of Sharif.

See Page 12 Col 4

Biman crew's death

CID interrogates Dhaka jail inmates

CID investigators yesterday interrogated some inmates of the Dhaka Central Jail in connection with the death of Biman crew Nuruzzaman Sharif, reports UNB.

Officials said a team of the Criminal Investigation Department interrogated the prisoners who were in Tejgaon thana custody while Sharif was on remand there on June 14 and 15.

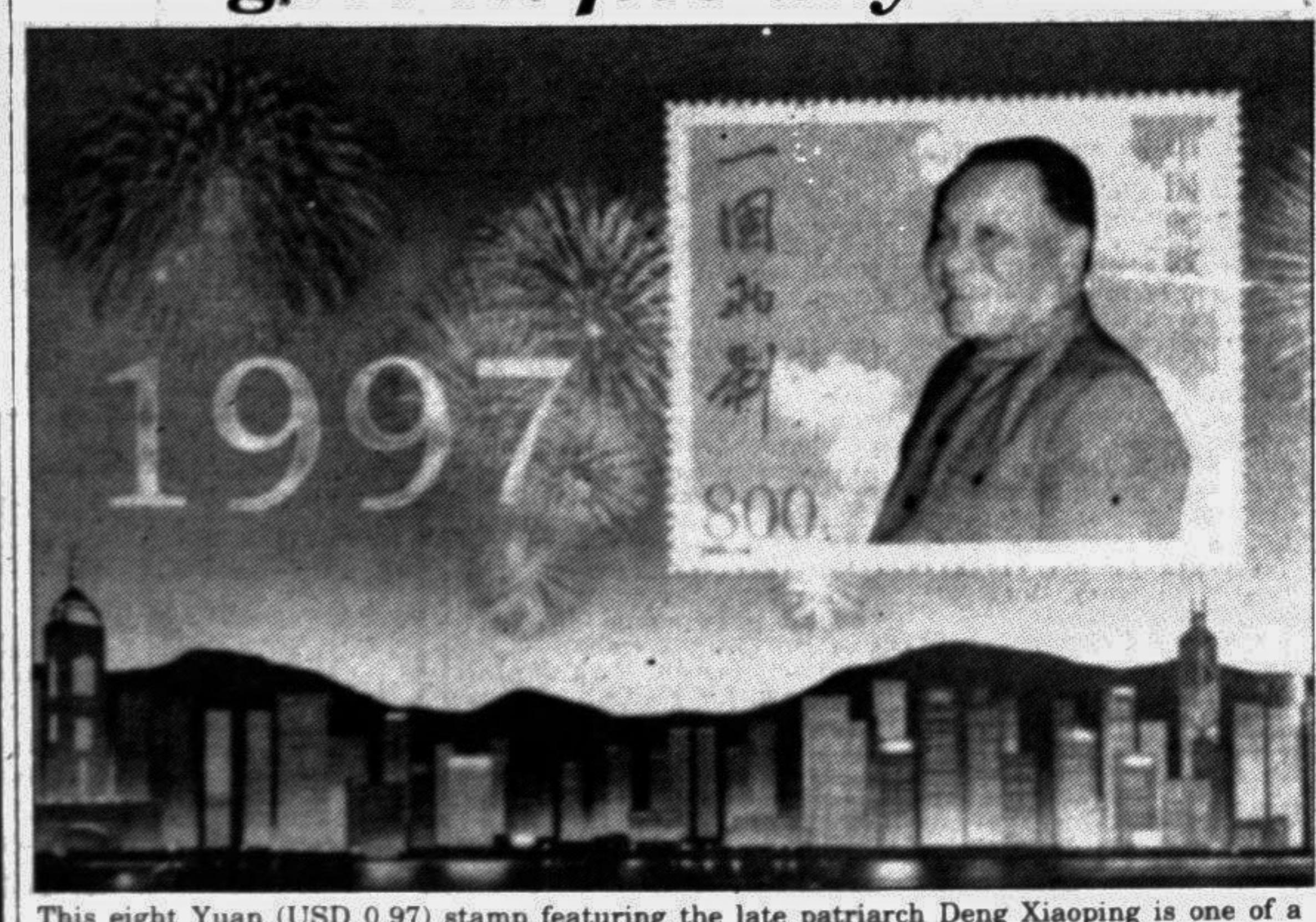
However, the prisoners were learnt to have made contradictory statements regarding alleged torture on Sharif in police custody.

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See Page 12 Col 4

HK goes on five-day handover holiday



This eight Yuan (USD 0.97) stamp featuring the late patriarch Deng Xiaoping is one of a series of Chinese commemorative stamps which will be issued on July 1 to mark the return of Hong Kong to Chinese rule. The writing on the left of the stamp reads "One Country Two Systems". —AFP/UNB photo

HONG KONG, June 27: Many Hong Kong residents will be seeing red after Monday — more of the field of red and the five yellow stars that adorn the mainland Chinese flag, reports AP.

After Hong Kong reverts to Chinese sovereignty July 1, China's national flag will be hoisted outside designated places in Hong Kong. Britain's colonial arrangement did not specify where the British

government has excluded a few prospective areas within the 15 blocks opened to foreign companies for hydrocarbon exploration and the step was taken in national interest, sources said.

These six or seven prospective areas were kept out of negotiations in favour of exploration by BAPEX, the oil and gas exploration unit of Petrobangla, a source said.

The decision was conveyed earlier in the month to different foreign companies interested in participating in bidding for the 15 blocks.

The government recently approved a project profile of BAPEX for exploration and drilling of a well in Sikaili. Sikaili is one of the areas excluded from bidding by foreign companies.

The excluded areas are located within blocks 3 and 4 in northern Bangladesh and blocks 9 and 10 near Comilla.

In separate messages to the government, some foreign companies said that the decision to exclude these areas had dis-

pointed them as they expected to explore the entire blocks they would negotiate for.

Questioning transparency and stability of the bidding process, these companies said they were earlier given the impression that all the "ring fenced" areas would be included in the blocks opened for bidding.

Exploration in 15 blocks Some areas kept out for BAPEX in nat'l interest

By Sharier Khan

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BAPEX has already proceeded with the Sikaili scheme with local funds and is planning to offer the foreign companies to go for joint venture in a couple of prospective ring fenced zones.

BAPEX is expected to drill an exploratory well in Sikaili in

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17 killed, 100 hurt in three road accidents

Seventeen people were killed and 100 others injured in three separate road accidents in Mymensingh, Magura and Comilla yesterday morning, report agencies.

According to UNB, nine people were killed and 85 injured when a truck overturned on Mymensingh-Kishoreganj road at Shibpur in Gouripur thana of Mymensingh district, police and hospital sources said.

The bodies were sent to the MMCH mortuary for autopsy. A case was filed with Gouripur thana in this connection.

In Magura, five people were killed and eight others injured in a collision between a passenger bus and a private car at Ramnagar on the Jhenidan-Dhaka highway.

Police said the accident occurred at about 10 am when the private car of a bridal party from Darshana collided head on with a Khulna-bound bus, killing five passengers of the car on the spot.

Four microbuses were also in the motorcade of the bridal party which was going to

See Page 12 Col 6

Depression Heavy rain, tidal surge forecast

The monsoon depression over northwest Bay and adjoining area moved northerly direction and crossed West Bengal coast of India near Sagar island at 6 pm yesterday and now lies as a land depression over Gangetic West Bengal and adjoining Bangladesh, reports UNB.

A Met Office special bulletin says it is likely to move in a north-easterly direction and may weaken gradually.

Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been advised to keep hoisted local cautionary signal number three.

River ports of the districts of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Noakhali, Comilla, Feni, Laxmipur.

Flash flood in Pabna

PABNA, June 27: Low-lying areas in Sujanagar and Bera thanas were submerged today due to incessant rain and onrush of hilly water, affecting nearly 5,000 people, reports UNB.

According to Water Development Board, 20 villages, mostly in char areas, were inundated in last 24 hours till 10 am today, although the river Jamuna was flowing below