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# The Daily Star

Today's Issue  
16 pages

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## Damaged ATP of Biman yet to be salvaged

**From Staff Correspondent**  
CHITTAGONG, July 3: A Bangladesh Biman aircraft that skidded off the runway while landing at Patenga Airport here at 9:20 last night, was yet to be brought to hanger, airport sources said.  
Biman officials said, measures were underway to start salvage operation.  
A seven-member team including the managing director of Bangladesh Biman and three engineers, arrived here today to see the aircraft.  
The team left for Dhaka in the afternoon after visiting the spot of the accident.  
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## BCI-Shokokai cooperation accord signed

**From Staff Correspondent**  
TOKYO, June 3: The Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI) and the Central Federation of Societies of Commerce and Industry (Shokokai) of Japan have signed an agreement for mutual understanding and cooperation.  
The agreement was signed after a meeting between the executives of BCI and Shokokai today at the Shokokai Headquarters.  
Satoshi Iida, Executive Director of Shokokai and Sharif Afzal Hossain, President of the Bangladesh Chamber of Industries led their respective sides.  
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## T&T, Mitsubishi sign accord to set up switching and power plant

An agreement between Mitsubishi Corporation of Japan and Bangladesh T&T Board was signed yesterday for installing a switching and power plant under the Tk 636.89 crore greater Dhaka telecommunications development project, reports T&T Board Chairman MA Mannan Chowdhury and General Manager of Mitsubishi Corporation Takuro Mochihara signed the agreement on behalf of their respective sides.  
A total of Tk 83.35 crore will be spent for setting up the switching and power plant.  
Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim, Harun-or-Rashid MP and high officials were present on the occasion, said an official handout.

## Production at Zia Fertiliser suspended

Zia Fertiliser Co Ltd yesterday suspended its production temporarily due to leakage in the synthesis boiler, reports UNB.  
The normal production of fertiliser at the factory is expected to resume on July 6 after the repairing works of the boiler, said an official handout.

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### Supplement

Today's 16-page issue of The Daily Star contains a 4-page supplement on the Independence Day of USA  
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## Businessmen's roundtable in Tokyo Keidanren to send team to explore investment areas

From M Anwarul Haq

TOKYO, July 3: Private Japanese companies and enterprises have expressed their willingness to invest in Bangladesh if an enabling atmosphere continued to prevail and steps were taken to remove impediments.  
They also expressed their desire to send a Keidanren delegation of leading Japanese business houses to Bangladesh shortly to explore further investment possibilities.  
This was conveyed to the visiting Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina by the top leaders of Japanese industry and trade.  
The Bangladesh leader had two important interactions with the Japanese business

community today. In the afternoon, the Bangladesh delegation was hosted a luncheon by the Japan Chamber of Commerce while in the evening a businessmen's roundtable conference was held. It was organised by Keidanren, the most influential business association in Japan headed by Shoichiro Toyoda. It is the representative body of leading business conglomerates in this country.  
Private Japanese entrepreneurs said at the Keidanren meeting that it was important to maintain the level of gas supply to the KAFCO power plant, which they described as the flagship company of Japan-Bangladesh business cooperation.

Whether KAFCO is going to be a success or not will determine the future of Japanese investment, pointed out Shoichiro Toyoda, referring to the report of the Keidanren mission which visited Bangladesh in June, 1994. He said that the plant was suffering gas shortage for its full production requirement.  
In response to the observation, Sheikh Hasina said that Bangladesh had enough gas and efforts would be made so that adequate supply could be ensured.  
Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr S A Samad explained that due to problems of supply line, government-

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Keidanren chief Shoichiro Toyoda receiving Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Businessmen's Roundtable Conference in Tokyo yesterday. — PHD photo.

## PM urges Japanese businessmen

# Avail of incentive package, invest on large scale

TOKYO, July 3: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today called upon Japanese businessmen to come forward with their investment in Bangladesh to avail of the investment opportunities and package of incentives offered by the country, reports UNB.  
She expressed the hope that Japan, being a country of surplus capital, would increase the volume of its investment in Bangladesh.  
The cost of production in Bangladesh is less than that of any other countries of the world, ample scopes and opportunities are also there in Bangladesh for marketing of the products, she told the Japanese business leaders.

Addressing a luncheon hosted by Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industries at Toshi Sky Room of Japan Chamber building, Hasina said an atmosphere of competitive investment has been created in Bangladesh for local and potential foreign investors.  
"Success has also been achieved in macro-economic stability in our country," she said adding Japan is one of the biggest development partners of Bangladesh.  
The Prime Minister said both the countries are working in close cooperation in the field of trade, investment, economic cooperation and development of the tourism industry.  
South Asia Free Trade Arrangement (SAFTA) is there to provide the entrepreneurs willing to invest in Bangladesh with a wider export market, she added.  
Special adviser of the Japan and Tokyo chambers of commerce and industry and standing advisor of Kajima Corporation Michio Mizoguchi, and chairman of the Japan-Bangladesh Joint Committee for Commercial and Economic Cooperation and chairman of the Toyo Engineering Corporation Uzuhiro Uwatoko also spoke on the occasion.  
Hasina said the Joint Committee for Commercial and Economic Cooperation of the two countries is contributing

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## Alleged telecom sector corruption Unanimous decision to form JS probe body

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday unanimously decided to form a parliamentary committee comprising both Treasury and Opposition bench members to probe into the alleged corruption relating to the awarding of a telecommunication sector contract to French company Alcatel by the previous BNP government.  
Following agreement between both the sides in the House, Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury said he would announce the formation of the probe body in parliament in 'due course'.  
A consensus on the issue came after the two sides had a brief debate on the allegation of

corruption, raised by Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed in the House on Sunday.  
Opening the debate, former commerce minister and BNP lawmaker Shamsul Islam strongly denied Tofael Ahmed's allegation that some BNP leaders were bribed by Alcatel for getting the contract.  
Participating in the budget discussion on Sunday, Tofael made the allegation and showed a list, which he said contained the names of some BNP leaders involved in it.  
"The minister only showed the so-called list but did not let us go through it. He ought to dis-

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## JS snippets

**By Nazmul Ashraf**  
Mia Bibi Rajee, Tobey Kazi-o Rajee (agreement between the bride and the groom also makes the kazi to agree), Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday after a consensus between the Treasury and the Opposition benches to investigate the allegation that some BNP leaders have taken bribes from the French company-Alcatel.  
The speaker told the House that he would form a probe body on the matter as proposed by the Industries Minister and supported by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition Prof Badrud-doza Chowdhury.  
The Speaker was in a hurry to adjourn House for Magreb prayers while BNP deputy  
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## Shantu Larma escapes attempt on life

**From Nurul Alam**  
CHITTAGONG, July 3: Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) Chairman Jyotirindryo Bodhipriyo Larma alias Shantu Larma has escaped an assassination attempt at Takumbari in Tripura state of India during a meeting of senior PCJSS leaders last week.  
According to a delayed report reaching here from PCJSS sources, the attempt was made on June 24 at Takumbari in south Tripura, which has a large camp housing tribal refugees.  
The meeting was convened as part of Shantu Larma's effort to convince tribal leaders about the agreement he is scheduled to sign with the government to end decades of hostilities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts on July 14 in Dhaka.  
The sources said at one stage of the meeting some cadres of the Shantibahini, the military  
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BDR deployed at Purana Paltan in the city during hartal hours yesterday. — Star photo

## Tenure of CHT councils expires today

**BANDARBAN, July 3:** Authorities are preparing to hand over administrative power of three hill districts to interim local government councils as the tenure of existing elected councils expires tomorrow, reports UNB.  
In Khagrachhari, a five-member interim council headed by outgoing chairman Samiran Dewan has already been formed.  
The process of constituting such bodies already began for Bandarban and Rangamati hill districts. Mong Kaya Ching Chowdhury and Rabindralal Chakma will continue as chairman of the interim councils of Bandarban and Rangamati respectively.  
According to Local Government Council Act 1989, each local government council will have 31 members, including the chairman. But the interim councils are being formed with five members, including the chairman.  
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## Work at Semutang drilling site stopped due to mechanical fault

**By Mizan Ali**  
Drilling at Semutang gasfield in Chittagong Hill Tracts has been stopped due to a mechanical breakdown in the rig at the drilling site, according to a message received in Dhaka.  
Petrobangla officials, when contacted, confirmed the shut-down due to mechanical failure but could not specify which component of the rig had failed.  
A British company, Cairn Energy Plc, was given the contract for exploration in the onshore block — Semutang — for which Chinese drilling contractors were employed.  
There was no pressure problem at the site during the incident about a week ago, the officials said.  
When asked what kind of Blow Out Preventor (BOP) are being used there and what was its strength, they said it was  
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## Prof Mostafa, Prof Arif new FBUTA president, secy-gen

Prof Mostafa Chowdhury and Prof Anwarul Azim Arif, have been elected president and secretary general respectively of the Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers' Association (FBUTA), reports BSS.  
FBUTA is the federation of teachers' associations of nine public universities of the country.  
Prof Chowdhury is the President of the Dhaka University Teachers' Association while Prof Arif is that of the Chittagong University Teachers' Association.  
Other elected office bearers of the federation are as follows: vice-presidents Prof Shahidul Islam (Chittagong University), Faez Mohammad Sirajul Islam (Islamic University), Dr Gowrang Deb Roy (Shahjalal University), joint secretary — Dr M A Matin (Jahangirnagar  
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## 100 hurt in sporadic violence Countrywide 8-hour hartal observed

By Staff Correspondent

An eight-hour countrywide hartal called by the opposition BNP was observed yesterday paralysing normal life and bringing economic activities to a virtual halt.  
Over 100 people including 15 police personnel were injured in sporadic incidents of violence in Dhaka, Barisal and Sirajganj during the hartal from 6 am to 2 pm.  
BNP, the largest ever opposition party in the parliament, called hartal to register protest against the 'anti-people' budget for fiscal 1997-98, passed by the Jatiya Sangsad on June 30.  
In the capital, at least 40 people including two leaders of a BNP front organisation were injured in various incidents. Police picked up 37 people from different parts of the city during the hartal period and registered five cases. However, no major incident was reported from any  
part of the country.  
At least 50 people including 15 policemen were injured in Barisal in a clash between BNP supporters and police at around 11.30 am. The hartal passed off almost peacefully in the port city of Chittagong and the divisional headquarters of Sylhet, according to our staff correspondent's reports.  
Our staff correspondent reports from Barisal: Over 100 policemen and two platoons of armed police were deployed to bring the situation under control during the clash at Sadar Road. Sixty rounds of tear gas shells were lobbed and police picked up 13 persons. At a press conference later, BNP condemned the 'police action' and announced an agitation programme today (Friday).  
A press release issued by the police headquarters in Dhaka  
See Page 12 Col 3

commonman is now at stake. "There is a stagnation in business, trade and production and there is almost no investment." On the other hand, Begum Zia said domestic industries are being closed one after another and local products are losing market as the borders are open. Thousands of workers are now passing their days in uncertainty, and continuous extortion and attacks pushing the industries toward closure, she further alleged.  
Begum Zia said farmers are now frustrated as they don't get fair price of their produce. Above all, the government has increased the prices of fertiliser and agri-inputs.  
Further more, she said, the government has imposed taxloads and surcharge on essentials, industrial raw materials.  
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## People have rejected budget: Khaleda

BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday said an all-out hartal was observed spontaneously only at two days' notice which proved people have no confidence in this government, reports BSS.  
In a post-hartal statement, she said people of all walks of life totally rejected the 'anti-people' budget for 1997-98 that imposed regressive tax and indiscriminate surcharge.  
The BNP chief congratulated the countrymen and expressed gratitude for spontaneously observing the eight-hour hartal.  
The Leader of the Opposition in Parliament said the present government became isolated from the people due to its 'anti-people, undemocratic, and subversive' activities.  
She said, wrong policies of this government have ruined the economy and livelihood of

## Mixed reaction over SEC chairman's resignation

The resignation of Dr Harunur Rashid as Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has caught everyone in the capital market by surprise.  
Some have welcomed it while others have expressed their bewilderment.  
They expressed their surprise that he decided to resign so soon after presiding over the watchdog of the capital market during the recent boom and bust period in the share market. The period witnessed the country's biggest scam in the capital market and an investigation led to the prosecution of 32 people.  
Dr Rashid was appointed on August 6 last year on a three-year contract after his retirement as a Secretary to the government.  
When contacted, Dr Harunur Rashid yesterday declined to comment on his resignation letter. He would only say that he had sent it to the authorities.  
A decision is expected after arrival of Finance Minister SAMS Kibria, now accompanying Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on a visit to Japan.  
Sources said his resignation followed a behind the scene wrangling over the scam cases, his move to conduct further investigations and frustrations over his efforts to streamline the functioning of SEC.  
However, his decision to resign remained a secret. Even his close aides did not have any inkling until a Bangla daily reported it yesterday.  
But his critics did not hide their joy. They said he had virtually  
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## 20 hurt as rival launch terminal workers clash at Sadarghat

By Staff Correspondent  
At least 20 people were injured in a clash between two groups of workers at Sadarghat launch terminal in the old part of the city last night.  
Several home-made bombs were exploded during the hour-long clash that began at about 8 pm. The feuding groups were fighting to gain control over the terminal, according to police.  
Police picked up 48 people from the area.  
Of the injured, eight people identified as Abdur Rahim, 35, Ramjan, 30, Kabir, 25, Nannu, 38, Ramji, 30, Nabab Ali, 40, Shamim, 11, and Rafiq, 22, were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). Most of the injured suffered wounds from bomb blasts, police and hospital sources said.  
Police resorted to baton charge and fired tear gas shells to disperse the workers.  
More police have been deployed in the terminal area.

## JP (Zafar-Moazzem) announces 25-member presidium

By Staff Correspondent  
A 111-member central working committee and a 25-member presidium were formed at the council session of Jatiya Party under the leadership of Kazi Zafar Ahmed and Shah Moazzem Hossain, said a press release yesterday.  
Kazi Zafar Ahmed and Shah Moazzem Hossain, two senior presidium members of the JP, were respectively elected  
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## All permits for manpower export to Saipan cancelled

The government yesterday cancelled all permits for manpower export to Saipan, an official handout said, reports BSS.  
The government advised all citizens interested to go to Saipan to refrain from any sorts of monetary transaction with any recruiting agency in this connection.  
"If any one who has already given money in advance to any recruiting agency for a job in Saipan is requested to contact Director General of Manpower Bureau or Joint Secretary (Manpower) of the Ministry of Labour and Manpower within 15 days," the handout said.

# Declare arsenic poisoning a nat'l emergency: WHO

Over 23 million people in 24 districts, that is one fifth of the country's population, are at risk of arsenic poisoning and the problem is likely to take on epidemic proportions in the next few years, reports PROBE news agency.  
World Health Organisation (WHO) in its report on Arsenic Contamination of Drinking Water in Bangladesh, warned that the situation will take a serious turn in the next three or four years.  
"The government may consider to declare it as a national emergency and provide higher

priority to remedial measures," said WHO in another report on arsenic poisoning.  
Another report of WHO states, "Actions cannot wait any longer if large scale crisis is to be prevented."  
"It will be tough for Bangladesh to handle the situation," an informed source said.  
People suffering from arsenic poisoning have started dying. Official sources investigating the death of an arsenic-affected person in Laxmipur said that the matter has already become a social problem. Relatives and neighbours

tend to shun families of people suffering from arsenic poisoning, leading to marriage crises and social ostracism.  
Clinical investigation into the cause of poisoning revealed that the poor, already suffering from malnutrition, are the worst affected.  
Sources said the present situation is due to disturbance in the upper aquifer caused by indiscriminate sinking of tubewells over the past 25 years. Tubewells have been sunk without conducting the 23 tests set as parameters of safe drinking water.

Government and international agencies have promoted tubewells, totally disregarding the parameters.  
"Tests might have detected the arsenic poison long ago and the crisis could have been averted," said an expert pointing to the arsenic's dormant period of five to seven years inside a person's body.  
At the initial stage of illness, an arsenic poisoned person is affected by a variety of diseases including melanosis, keratitis, conjunctivitis, bronchitis and gastroenteritis. Peripheral neuropathic and hepatopathy are

the next stages of the poisoning.  
At the later stage gangrene in the limbs and malignant in neoplasm lead to death.  
Meanwhile, the Water Development Board has started collecting samples of water and soil of the affected areas in 10 districts to find the actual cause of arsenic contamination in water.  
Pointing to the lack of tested antidotes to cure chronic arsenic poisoning, WDB geologist Mizanur Rahman suggested rainwater harvest as a preventive. Storage and utilisation of rainwater is an excellent low-

cost technology to counter arsenic contamination in the water, he said, adding that it was particularly pertinent to the monsoon season.  
"As daily consumption cannot be met with the small filters, the government should immediately take up a crash programme for mobilising mass awareness," he added.  
He also expressed his concern regarding disposal of the arsenic waste gathered in the filters. "If the arsenic waste is randomly disposed, this can create further havoc through  
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