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CBA interference in banks: Task force to prepare action plan

In view of the interference by the trade unions in the management of Bangladesh Bank and other banks, the government has constituted a five-member task force to prepare an action plan for its remedy, reports BSS.

The task force has been formed with Managing Director of the Sonali Bank as its chairman under the 'Commercial Banking Restructuring Project', said a press release yesterday.

The committee has already started collecting information in this regard.

Anybody knowing any particular information relating to undue interference by the collective bargaining agents (CBAs) or trade unions in the bank management, their indiscipline activities, corruption and misbehaviour, is requested to contact the member of the committee, Md Shamsuddin, General Manager (Administration), Bangladesh Bank, Motijheel.

The committee also sought the cooperation of bank officers and staff, clients and patrons, and general public in this regard.

Such information and their recommendation should reach the committee within September 15, the press release added.

'Yasmin murder case politically motivated'

From Mozammel Haque
RANGPUR, Aug 18: Defence counsel while submitting arguments in the Yasmin rape and murder case in the District and Sessions Judge's court today said the case was false and politically motivated.

There was no existence of Yasmin and as such trial of Yasmin murder case does not arise, defence counsel Nazrul Islam said. Islam is defending accused Mahtab Hossain, former OC Kotwali thana, Dinaipur. He argued that his client did not suppress anything and there is no evidence of lapse in his duty. Mahtab has been falsely implicated in the case, he argued.

Another defence counsel, Abdul Haque Pramanik, defending accused former police



WHO CARES! This photograph of glittering shops of New Elephant Road was taken at 8:30 pm yesterday. Despite a DCC order to close shops at 7 pm to avoid massive loadshedding, such scenes are common at various shopping centres in the city everyday. While the shopowners make hay while the 'sun shines', the bulk of the loadshedding is applied on numerous residential areas of the city making life miserable for law-abiding citizens. Would the Mayor wake from his slumber and enforce his orders on the shop owners? — Star photo

City experiences severe loadshedding 135 mw power shortfall during peak hours

By Special Correspondent

Inadequate gas supply, overhauling of a number of power stations coupled with the lack of their maintenance are playing havoc with power supply in the country.

The loadshedding has made a comeback with repetition of late last year and early this year's situation when power failures for several hours and low voltage of electricity became the order of the day.

The situation worsened since Thursday when a safety valve at the gas grid at Narsingdi went out of order, reducing supply to the gas-fired power stations and forcing them to cut down the output.

At the same time a number of power stations, including the Kaptai power station, were undergoing maintenance or remained closed for mechanical problems, PDB sources said.

Even the Prime Minister could not escape the loadshedding while attending a meeting of the Awami Jubo League at the Institution of Engineers on Sunday. It was interrupted for about 45 minutes when the auditorium was plunged into darkness.

It was one of the worst in the current spell of loadshedding in the city on Sunday, with a 140 MW shortfall.

In central Dhaka, there had been a total of seven hours of loadshedding yesterday and five hours on Sunday, the PDB sources said.

Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) sources said that there had been 50 MW of loadshedding in the city yesterday until early afternoon. But in the peak hours there was a 135 MW shortfall out of a demand of 925-1050 MW.

The city's gasping power problem had been compounded by a failed transformer at Parbagh since Thursday.

Efforts were being made to fix the transformer. But the 50 MVA transformer playing a vital role in distributing power from a 11 KV system resulted in a loadshedding of at least 20

Fuel prices increase: Petrol now Tk 21 per litre, diesel Tk 12.95

Fuel prices increased as the government yesterday refixed the rates of petroleum products, including petrol, octane and diesel, reports UNB.

Price of LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) also went up with the refixing of price with approval of the cabinet.

The rate of diesel has been refixed at Tk 12.95 per litre from Tk 12.70 while petrol and octane prices rose sharply to Tk 21 and Tk 23 from Tk 13.70 and Tk 14.65 respectively.

Price of kerosene has been refixed at Tk 12.95, furnace oil Tk 5, jute batching oil (JBO) Tk 17, light diesel oil (LDO) Tk 14, special boiling point (SBP) Tk 28 and MTT Tk 17.

The rate of LPG has been refixed at Tk 250 per cylinder, up from Tk 185.25.

An official announcement said the cabinet approved a proposal for refixing the petroleum prices in keeping with international market and devaluation of taka against the US dollar.

The approval was given in a cabinet meeting held at the PM's office with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair yesterday.

The cabinet also endorsed in principle amendment to the Private University Act 1992.

Ministers, State Ministers, Cabinet Secretary, Prime Minister's Principal Secretary and other secretaries were present in the meeting.

JMB approach road to be completed by Nov

SIRAJGANJ, Aug 18: The 17-km approach road of Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge is expected to be completed by November this year, reports UNB.

Officials said nine culverts and five bridges were constructed on the approach road from Nakla of Rajganj thana to Sirajganj Sadar.

The works on the project started in 1994.

Nepal requests for transit from Sept 1

By Staff Correspondent

Nepal has requested Bangladesh through the Fulbari-Bangladesh route from September 1, the Ambassador of Nepal in Dhaka said last night.

Nepalese envoy Lok Bahadur Shrestha said his government in a letter last week has requested that Dhaka take necessary steps to establish customs, immigration and warehouse facilities for the movement of Nepalese goods. The communication mentioned that India had agreed to provide Nepal transit facilities through Bangladesh since last May.

Initially, Nepal would like to use the Fulbari point on the Indian side and the Bangladesh point on the Bangladesh side.

Sources in the Bangladesh government said that Dhaka will try to accede to Nepal's request immediately but could not confirm if it could provide the transit arrangements from September 1 as requested.

Clinton to visit Bangladesh early next yr

US President Bill Clinton will visit Bangladesh early next year at the invitation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, diplomatic sources said in Dhaka yesterday, reports UNB.

He will be accompanied by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton.

A source in the State Department informed Bangladesh Ambassador to the United States KM Shahabuddin of Clinton's planned visit to Bangladesh.

It was immediately conveyed to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina through a faxed message by the Bangladesh mission in Washington on Sunday, the sources said.

This will be the first ever visit by a US President to Bangladesh.

Hasina invited the US President to visit Bangladesh when she met him at the Oval Office of the White House on February 4 this year. And he accepted it.

SSP fertiliser import Ban order 'misquoted' to favour 3 companies?

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi

Commerce ministry officials misquoted a prime ministerial directive to ban import of a particular type of fertiliser in order to allow a couple of businessmen to make money. The question is, was it a deliberate mistake?

The ban, which came following a Cabinet decision, sought mainly to protect Bangladesh farmers' interest, but loopholes, some feel, were built, eventually helped three companies owned by two businessmen.

They opened letters of credit to import 70,000 tonnes of SSP (single super phosphate) fertiliser and bureaucrats in different departments issued "clarifications" and "circulars" to validate the LCs.

They together should make some Tk 13 crore in profits in a monopolised market, according to current prices.

The directive from the Prime Minister's Office said "colour-coated and granular" SSP would no longer be allowed to be imported into Bangladesh. The commerce ministry officials "mistook" it for "colour-coated granular".

The omission of the word "and" made the big difference. Golam Mostafa, who came up with two companies called Maru Trade Ltd and Commodity Trading Co (CTC), and Ariful Huq of AR Trading took full advantage of it, if the chronology of events had any meaning, according to documents obtained by The Daily Star.

Colour-coated granular means it can be colour-coated but not granular or granular but not colour coated. This is contrary to what the Cabinet

Education policy Nat'l committee in favour of guidelines for students politics

By Mizan Ali

The National Committee on Education Policy has recommended that there has to be a guideline for students politics in educational institutions, according to sources in the committee.

The sources said there is a consensus among the members of the committee for a guideline for students politics on the campus. However, salient features of the guideline could not be known.

Talking to The Daily Star chairman of the committee Prof Shamsul Haq said that he received reports from the 19 sub-committees and the final report was being prepared for submission to the Prime Minister on August 26.

New envoy to Canada soon

By Staff Correspondent

The government is likely to appoint a new High Commissioner to Canada after the return of M R Osmany whose contractual appointment has been cancelled.

Meanwhile it was learnt from sources in the Prime Minister's Office and the Foreign Ministry that Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain, who was earlier tipped for the job, would not be appointed to the post.

The decision not to forward the name of Mosharrar Hossain to the host country was taken at See Page 12 Col 2

Bangabandhu Murder Case PW-7 says he heard 11 army personnel were involved

By Staff Correspondent

The seventh prosecution witness in the Bangabandhu murder case told the court yesterday that the incident of killing of Bangabandhu and his family members on August 15, 1975 was reported by him verbally to the Commanding Officer of his Regiment.

Lt Col (LPR) Abul Bashar, who was an Army Captain and Commanding Officer of the troops brought from Comilla for guarding Ganabhaban and Bangabandhu's Dhanmandi residence, was being cross-examined by the defence lawyers in the Court of District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka.

Fourteen lawyers of the 14 absconding accused completed their cross-examination of Bashar. When the court was adjourned at around 4:30 pm Bashar was being cross-examined by the lawyer of one of the five accused in custody.

Proceedings of the court will resume at 10:30 am today. Maj

Focus on city crime-III Over 1500 acres of govt land under illegal occupation

By Morshed Ali Khan

More than 1,500 acres of land in the city belonging to different government organisations are under illegal occupation, according to sources in the Land Ministry.

Most of these lands, classified by the Land Ministry as 'unused', is under the occupation of slum dwellers. The lands belong to the Housing and Settlement Department, PWD, RAJUK, Railway and Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), the sources said quoting a recent Land Ministry survey. But they did not give the break down as to which organisation lost how much land in the process.

Other land grabbers in the city are 'big shots' in posh residential areas, musclemen, religious organisations and political parties.

Officials concerned in these organisations said the problem of land grabbing remained unresolved for years because they had no authority or responsibility to recover the lands.

But a Land Ministry official said, "It is the responsibility of each department to ensure that its resources are protected as in the case of private landowners."

The occupiers build settlements on these lands while the owners — the government departments — just overlook the matter, he said.

There are 3,007 slums in the city, occupying prime lands. The slum dwellers pay rent to the 'landlord', popularly known as 'chairman'. Police said, without the chairman's permission, none is allowed to build any dwelling in the area.

The rent for each shack varies on location and size. The 'most expensive' shacks are along the railway tracks in Kawran Bazar where a single room may cost up to Tk 1,000 a month because a market, a commercial area and a busy truck terminal is nearby. Part of the rent money collected by the 'chairmen' (there are at least three in Kawran Bazar area) rolls into the hands of 'big bosses'.

The landowner, in the case of Kawran Bazar area, is Bangladesh Railway. It is unable to evict the occupiers.

"When we go to clear the site, thousands of people are mobilised to resist us. Who wants a problem on a national scale? Even the policemen are reluctant," said a BR official. So the illegal occupation goes on.

A Land Ministry official pointed out that in 1996, it had allotted to RAJUK the huge stretch of land beside Hotel Sonargaon for a beautification project. RAJUK was also supposed to build the World Trade Centre at the same spot. The site is now a huge slum, accommodating several thousand families. When contacted, a RAJUK official said the slum dwellers have to be rehabilitated to clear the site. "After the Bhasantek incident, all departments 'oncerned are afraid to evict any such settlement. So we will have to wait," he said.

Officials of the Land Ministry

4 fall sick after taking breakfast at film star Razzak's house

By Staff Correspondent

Four persons fell sick at the Gulshan residence of film star Razzak after taking breakfast yesterday.

Police suspected that a maid of the house may have mixed poison with the food.

The sick persons included Razzak's wife, a relative and two assistants. They were taken to a local clinic.

Gulshan police arrested the maid identified as Joynab Begum, aged about 30.

However, details about the incident could not be known immediately. Police were interrogating the maid last night.

A case was lodged with Gulshan thana in this connection.

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More embankments or river dredging? Govt, donors locked in constant argument, says minister

By Reaz Ahmad, back from Tangail

The government is locked in a "constant argument" with the donor agencies over the strategy to redress the problem of flooding and too much dependence on ground water. Food and Agriculture Minister Motia Chowdhury said yesterday.

The debate with the donors is whether we will endorse their ready-made prescription to go for building more and more embankments or they will agree to our proposal for dredging the rivers," she said.

The minister was inaugurating a five-day international workshop on "South Asian Meeting on Food, Ecology and Culture: In the Context of Livelihood Struggles of Rural Communities" at Bishnupur, a quiet village under Delduar thana in Tangail.

Experts from India, Pakistan, Canada, Malaysia and the US are participating in the workshop, organised by UBINIG, a non government organisation.

The workshop is being held at UBINIG's regional project site at Bishnupur. Experts from home and abroad will focus on post-GAAT food security in the world, particularly its impact on LDCs (Least Developed Countries).

Speaking as chief guest, Motia Chowdhury said, the government considers dredging of rivers and re-excavation of water bodies, as the "ultimate solution" to flooding. "The Prime Minister herself is trying to make the funding agencies understand the multifarious benefits of the strategy," she added.

Naming World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF), Motia Chowdhury said they are "continuously arguing" that dredging is a costly affair. "But, our Prime Minister is insisting why, in a country of rivers, we will remain dependent on ground water. Rivers are losing their depth due to siltation which is causing

Petrobangla driller found dead in city office

A senior driller of Petrobangla was found dead in his Kalabagan office in the city yesterday, police and hospital sources said, reports UNB.

The dead was identified as Hira Lal Goura, 40, of village Buriganj of Shibganj thana under Bogra district.

His body, bearing injury marks, was found hanging from the ceiling at an office of the Petrobangla at Kalabagan at about 2 pm.

Police suspected that the assailant first beat Hira Lal to death and then hanged him from the ceiling to cover up the murder.

An official at Dhanmondi thana said the hanging condition indicated that Hira Lal did not commit suicide as his toe was touching the floor.

AQM Rafiqur Rahman, an incharge of Petrobangla, has filed a murder case with the Dhaka Police. He said he would guard the night guard of the office for interrogation.

Occidental looking for new site to drill relief well

From Iqbal Siddiquee

SYLHET, Aug 19: The Occidental is now looking for a new location for drilling the relief well as the second location has been abandoned due to intensification of gas leakage through some points there, said an official in the Moulvibazar district administration this afternoon.

The official, who visited the Magurchhara Gasfield area today, said the US company has asked for a suitable location on the eastern side of the Forest Department land. If the Forest Department agrees to provide the land, they may ask the Fulbari Tea state authorities, which is also located just adjacent to the main gasfield, the official said.

Occidental had selected a new site for drilling the relief well about 640 metres off the main well in the last week of July. Accordingly, it also began some preparatory work there. But, the site has been abandoned due to the intensification

Trader, teacher murdered in Jhendidah

From Our Correspondent

JHENDIDAH, Aug 18: A businessman was stabbed to death and a teacher beaten to death in two separate incidents in the district yesterday.

Raghnath Saha, 42, a businessman of Chaklapara area in the town was stabbed to death last night by a gang of miscreants.

According to police, Raghnath was returning home with Tk 40,000. When he reached Chaklapara at about 10pm, the