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Panic spreads in Magurchhara again as gas leakage intensifies

From Iqbal Siddiquee
SYLHET, Aug 19: Panic has spread again in the Magurchhara area with further intensification of gas leakage through a large number of points around the gas well for the last three days.

Occidental experts are observing the situation and have termed the situation serious. With the deterioration of the situation, Occidental officials were engaged in shifting its equipment from the second location for digging the relief well. The company is now preparing two new spots for the relief well.

The new locations are owned by the Forest Department and Occidental has started clearing. See Page 12 Col 8

US Asst Secy of State due Sept 10

By Staff Correspondent
Carl Inder Furth, US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, is due to arrive in Dhaka on September 10 on a three-day working visit.

He will meet senior government officials and also call on the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, according to official sources.

This is the first visit of the US Assistant Secretary of State since his appointment to the position recently. He took over from Robin Raphael. See Page 12 Col 3

PM calls on President

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina met President Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban last night, reports UNB.

She apprised the President of certain important decisions recently taken by the Cabinet.

Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr S A Samad and Secretary to the President Muhammad Enamul Haq were present.

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Business

Jute farmers fighting for survival

DSE index recovers six points
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Top trade bodies worried over economic situation

Govt urged to take corrective measures

By Staff Correspondent

Six top business bodies yesterday urged the government to 'dispassionately review' the economic and law and order situations prevailing in the country and take necessary corrective measures before the economic deterioration goes beyond control.

In a joint statement yesterday, the business bodies said the country's macro-economic fundamentals are under pressure which has already threatened investment climate, and upset trade and industry. If the trend continues, it will be impossible to achieve this year's envisaged growth rate, they said.

The statement was issued by Samson H Chowdhury, Presi-

dent of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, ASM Quasem, President of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mahbub Jamil, President of Foreign Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mustafa Golam Quddus, President of Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association, AGI Chowdhury, Chairman of Bangladesh Cha Sangsad, and M Shahjahan, Chairman of Bangladesh Textile Mills Association.

The business community can not but be seriously worried over the overall situation and, accordingly, urges upon the government to immediately review the reasons for liquidity

crisis in the banks, alarming fall in the foreign exchange reserve, stalemate in the export sector, manifold increase in the arrival of smuggled goods in the market, decline in the prices of cash crops, lack of any measures to save the collapsing stock market etc., the statement said.

These problems, coupled with energy scarcity and 'unbelievable harassment' of business people of all categories by local *mastans*, make it increasingly difficult to pursue normal business and industrial activities, the business leaders said.

In the last few months, the ministries of Commerce and Industries worked closely with



Auto-rickshaws stayed off the city roads yesterday as drivers went on a strike protesting the price hike of fuel. —Star photo

'Fuel price refixed due to price hike in int'l market'

The government refixed petroleum price as it incurred a loss of about Tk 450 crore in the last fiscal due to price hike in the international market, reports UNB.

In a clarification issued yesterday, the government said Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation had incurred the loss as it did not increase the price even after the price hike of petroleum in the international market since July 1996.

The clarification came for dispelling any confusion that might be created in public mind due to the increase in fuel price.

"It will not be possible for the corporation to survive if the sale price of petroleum continues to remain lower than its buying rate. The prices of fuel have been refixed to make up the loss," according to the government clarification.

It said many countries, including India, Thailand, Pakistan and the Philippines, had increased the prices of fuel with the increase in international

Hartal on Aug 24 if fuel price hike not withdrawn: BNP

By Staff Correspondent

BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia has announced that a dawn-to-dusk hartal will be observed across the country on August 24 if the government decision raising fuel price is not withdrawn by August 23.

The Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad gave the ultimatum while addressing the 17th founding anniversary function of Jatiyatabadi Sechhyasebak Dal at the Engineers Institution in the city yesterday. She urged all political parties, Islamic groups, professional bodies and members of the public to participate in the hartal, if the demand is not accepted.

Begum Zia also called upon all political and social forces to launch an all-out agitation to oust the "autocratic, bankrupt,

corrupt and betrayer" government and save the country from "total ruination."

"She blamed the government for destroying the national economy, industries and education in a planned way and said "it (government) can't be allowed to stay in power any more."

The Opposition leader came down heavily on the 14-month-old government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for the fuel price hike, devaluation of taka, deterioration of law and order, terrorism, corruption, nepotism and incompetence.

Protesting the fuel price enhancement, the BNP chief said it will destroy business, industries and agriculture and affect the common man. She criticised the government for taking

14mw loadshedding in some city areas for 4 weeks

By Staff Correspondent

The woes of consumers of Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (DESA) in a number of areas in central Dhaka would continue for four weeks from tomorrow for repair of an underground cable at Dhanmondi grid station.

Apologising for the inconvenience, DESA said in a statement yesterday that there would be 14 mw of loadshedding in Siddikbazar, Bakshibazar, Kazi Alauddin Road, Tophkhana Road, Segunbagicha, Green Road, New and Old Elephant Road, Sonargaon Road, Central Road, New Market, Gauchia Market, Azampur and Kawran Bazar areas till the fault is repaired during that period.

The trouble began when a 50/75 MVA transformer out of the two at Dhanmondi grid station, supplying 100 mw of power during peak hours, was shut on August 13 midnight

See Page 12 Col 1

Dhaka's entry into IOR okayed

The proposal for inducting Bangladesh in the Indian Ocean Rim (IOR) has been endorsed by all the 14 member-states, reports UNB.

IOR was formally launched in the name of Indian Ocean Rim Regional Organisation (IORRC) at a ministerial meeting of the member countries in Port Louis, the capital of Mauritius, recently.

Bangladesh will become a member of the intercontinental organisation in its next ministerial meeting, Foreign Ministry sources here said.

All the 48 countries of the Indian ocean region, ranging from Malaysia to South Africa, are eligible to become members of the economic organisation whose concept was developed during President Nelson Mandela's visit to India in 1994.

7 killed, 40 hurt in Savar bus accident

SAVAR, Aug 19: Seven people were killed and 40 injured as a passenger bus rammmed a roadside tree near National Mausoleum on the Dhaka-Aricha highway today, reports UNB.

Police and witnesses said the Sauria-bound minibus from Dhaka was crumpled as it rammmed a banyan tree after the driver lost control at about 2 pm.

Four people died on the spot, one on way to hospital and two others at Savar Thana Health Complex.

Five of them were identified as Mamun Hossain, 23, Samsu Mistri, 40, Kallimuddin, 60.

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Envoy tells The Daily Star

Nepal eager to bring all imports thru' Mongla Port

By M Anwarul Haq

Nepal would be looking forward to importing all its goods through Mongla Port if the user facilities, charges and road communication network, related to transit, provided by Bangladesh were economic and cost effective vis-a-vis Calcutta Port.

This was stated by Lok Bahadur Shreshtha, Nepalese Ambassador in Dhaka, in an interview with The Daily Star yesterday.

Nepal has made a request for receiving transit facilities from

Bangladesh through the Bangladesh route for the movement of Nepalese goods from September 1. The government is keen to be going ahead for establishing customs, immigration and warehouse facilities.

The Nepalese envoy said that last year his country imported nearly 780,000 metric tons of goods through Calcutta Port.

This year, the estimated volume of imports by Nepal would be in the neighbourhood of one million metric tons. We

are expecting that initially we can import two lakh metric tons through Mongla Port provided it is competitive and cost-effective."

Lok Bahadur Shreshtha said, "Bangladesh may expect to cater to the entire bulk of Nepalese cargo if it was in a position to do so."

Asked what are the requirements, the envoy said, "The warehouse facilities and the road communication has to be improved in the long run. Be-

See Page 12 Col 3

Depression over Bay

The monsoon depression over the north-west Bay and adjoining Orissa West Bengal coast moved slightly north north-westwards last night, reports UNB.

According to a bulletin of the Storm Warning Centre, the depression was centered at about 270 kms southwest of Mithuna city and 440 kms south southwest of Chittagong Port at 9 pm.

The depression is likely to intensify further and move in a north-northwesterly direction. Maximum sustained wind within 40 kms of the depression centre is about 40 mph, rising to

See Page 12 Col 1

PW-7 tells court

Armed Forces' command broke down on Aug 15 '75

By Staff Correspondent

LI Col (LPR) Abul Bashar, the seventh prosecution witness in the Bangabandhu murder cases, told the Court of District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka yesterday that police took over the charge of Bangabandhu's residence after the killings there on August 15, 1975.

"Prior to the incident, police was responsible for the security of that house and the military guards were deployed to augment the strength," he added.

Bashar was an Army Captain and commanding officer of the troops that were on duty to

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**Office of the Auditor & Controller
General of Accounts, Bangladesh**
Audit House, 43, Kakrail Road, Dhaka-1000

NOTICE

It is hereby notified for information of all concerned that three separate complaints cells have been opened at the office of the Controller General of Accounts, Office of the Controller General Defence Finance & Office of the Additional Director General (Finance), Bangladesh Railway, respectively.

2. All concerned are requested to directly lodge their specific complaints, if any, regarding pay, allowance, pension, provident fund, bill due for construction or supply work etc. to the under-mentioned officials:

(A) Controller General of Accounts, Bangladesh, Office of the Controller General of Accounts, CGA (formerly AGB) Building (2nd floor), Segun Bagicha, Dhaka-1000.

(B) Controller General Defence Finance, First 12-storey Govt Office Building (4th phase), Segun Bagicha, Dhaka-1000.

(C) Additional Director General (Finance), Bangladesh Railway, Rail Bhaban (4th floor), Abdul Gani Road, Dhaka-1200.

3. In case the complaint lodged is not settled within 10 (ten) days, it is requested to contact the Deputy Auditor & Controller General of Accounts (System), Office of the Auditor & Controller General of Accounts, Audit House, 43, Kakrail Road, Dhaka-1000 or the Personal Secretary of the Auditor & Controller General of Accounts.

Mohammad Shafiqul Alam
Deputy Auditor & Controller General
of Accounts (System)
Phone: 832595

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Gulshan-Banani lake development

Rajuk approved project violating original accord

By Staff Correspondent

Rajuk has approved Indus Valley's Gulshan-Banani Lake Development Project on 220 acres of land violating the original agreement signed on December 1 last year.

According to documents obtained by The Daily Star, the original agreement between Rajuk and Indus Valley was signed on the basis of 150 acres of land. But Rajuk approved the project on January 21 this year on 220 acres without any deed of rectification.

A Rajuk source confirmed that officially 70 acres of land was handed over to Indus Valley for 75 years, in addition to the 150 acres stipulated in the original agreement.

Under the deed, Rajuk handed over 150 acres of land to Indus Valley, a Singapore-based developer which took up the project on a build-operate-

transfer (BOT) basis. Indus Valley is to build a huge complex consisting two 35-storied condominiums, one 22-storied service apartment, one 16-storied condominium, a cultural centre, school and club, 32 six-storied condominiums and other facilities.

Serious procedural flaws in Rajuk's deal with Indus Valley emerged and the government formed a three-member committee to look into the matter. The committee is now investigating.

Neither Rajuk nor Indus Valley sought permission from the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) to build high-rise structures before or after approval of the project. An official source said it was a must to obtain such authorisation from the CAAB.

See Page 12 col 6

Yasmin did not die in police custody, court told

From Our Correspondent

RANGPUR, Aug 19: Arguments in the Yasmin rape and murder case continued for the third day today in the court of the District and Sessions Judge, Rangpur.

Former police super of Dinajpur Abdul Motaleb is among the accused who are facing charges under section 201(34) of the Penal Code for alleged offence of lapses in duty, damage of 'alamat', concealment of facts and attempting to divert the case.

Defence counsel Khandaker Mahboob Hossain and Taleb Ali who appeared for Motaleb denied the prosecution allegation that Yasmin died in police custody.

Defence counsel said that the accused police super never tried to hide anything and did his duty promptly after hearing the incident in the small hours of August 24, 1995. His trial in the case is most unfortunate, they

See Page 12 Col 5

99 pc samples of sweets tested by IPH adulterated

By Naimul Haq

More than 50 per cent of food and allied items marketed in the country are adulterated, according to Institute of Public Health (IPH) officials.

In case of sweets, 99 samples out of every 100 are found adulterated while edible oil and honey come next with 65 per cent samples adulterated.

"Despite having the authority, Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institute (BSTI) is not monitoring the adulteration, which is growing at an alarming rate every year," said one of

the officials.

"They are responsible for fixing the standard of food items, but should not sit idle after testing the samples and providing go-ahead for production of the items. We have received many allegations where manufacturers, after obtaining BSTI's permission, were producing sub-standard products. This way manufacturers are cheating consumers by using BSTI's 'certificate marks'," he added.

"In the absence of proper

monitoring, adulteration of food has almost doubled since the independence. Manufacture of sub-standard products is common because it can be supplied at cheaper rates due to use of low quality substances. Cheaper the price, more the sale. This concept is very true in a country where average wage earners cannot afford expensive food," officials pointed out.

When the matter was brought to the notice of a BSTI high official, he said, "It is not

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