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# The Daily Star

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## Govt officials visit CHT to prepare for repatriation

By Special Correspondent

Senior officials visited different areas of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) during the past two days to set the government machinery in motion ahead of repatriation of thousands of tribal refugees from the Tripura state of India, likely in late November or December.

Highly placed official sources yesterday expressed optimism that once the peace accord is signed between the government and the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) to end decades of hostilities in the CHT, the refugees are likely to return home.

Some 43,000 refugees are living in camps in Tripura. They fled their homes when peace negotiations collapsed and violence resumed in April, 1986.

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## PM leaves for UK Oct 23 to attend CHOGM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to hold bilateral talks with more than a dozen heads of state and government during the forthcoming CHOGM in UK, reports UNB.

She will lead the Bangladesh delegation to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) which will begin October 24 in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Sheikh Hasina will leave Dhaka on October 23 to attend the conference. She will be accompanied by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Foreign Secretary Mostafizur Rahman and Director General at the Foreign Office Ziauddin.

Queen Elizabeth II, the head of the Commonwealth, will inaugurate the 4-day conference of the loose confederation of former British colonies, to be participated by heads of government of 53 member countries.

The coming CHOGM will

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## No power supply in Barguna town for 28 hrs

From Our Correspondent

BARGUNA, Oct 8: Barguna town plunged into darkness again, only after a week it experienced a power blackout for five days.

For the last 28 hours there was no power supply in the town. Local PDB officials attributed faults in transmission lines for the blackout. But they could not say when they would be able to repair the lines.

Earlier, power in the town was restored on September 30 after five days.

## Chinese Vice Premier due Oct 21

Chinese Vice-Premier Wu Bangguo is expected to pay an official visit to Bangladesh in the third week of October. Foreign Office sources said yesterday, reports UNB.

During the three-day visit beginning October 21, Bangguo will hold an official talks with Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad covering the entire gamut of bilateral relations as well as regional and international issues of common concern.

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on the Internet  
<http://www.dailystarnews.com>

## Inside Today Article

Currency crisis in South-east Asia

**Can it be a Blessing in Disguise for Bangladesh?**

by Munim Kumar Barai  
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Arafat, Netanyahu vow to overcome crisis  
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## Business

Kibria links new lending to recovery of default loans

DSE index slides on lower volume  
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# 15 pc increase in gas price likely

By Sharier Khan

The government is actively considering increase of gas price by over 15 per cent from next month as per recommendations of a high powered committee, energy ministry sources said.

The increase has become inevitable as the government is committed to purchase gas from private gas field developers from April next year at a rate nearly double the current price, the sources added.

The average price of gas per 1000 cubic feet which is now Tk 55 will rise to about Tk 63 if the decision is taken. The government will purchase gas from private gas field developers at a rate of about Tk 90 per 1000 cubic feet.

If the government does not increase the price of gas now, it will have to subsidise the gas to be purchased from the British company, Cairn from April next and Occidental from sometime later.

The announcement of new pay scale is also influencing the decision to increase the gas price, the sources claimed.

As per the National Gas Pricing Policy Formulation Committee's suggestion, the government has plans to increase gas price by about 80 per cent by 2001.

According to gas expert, the agreed price of gas between the government and foreign companies was not realistic in the context of the national economy. It will be difficult for the people to pay such high price, he added.

"This pricing is alright if one compares it with the price of furnace oil in the international market. As per international standard, the price of gas per 1000 cubic feet (or per unit) should be equal to at least 75 per cent of the price of furnace oil," the expert said. "But this is not realistic if we consider the economic situation of the country."

However, if the government does not increase the gas price immediately, it will be severely

See Page 12 Col 3

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See Page 12 Col 3

## Political activities likely to be banned at IU

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA, Oct 8: Authorities of the Islamic University may impose a ban on political activities on the campus for three months from October 10, according to sources.

The IU Syndicate is likely to take a decision to this effect at its meeting tomorrow.

The Liaison Committee, in a report prepared in consultation with student leaders and submitted to Vice-Chancellor Prof Kayesuddin recently suggested the ban, the sources said.

The Liaison Committee includes Dr Abdul Karim Khan, Proctor, Selim Toha, Internal Law Adviser and Harun-Ur-Rashid Ashkari.

The Syndicate may also take decisions to reintroduce one-day weekly holiday as demanded by students and introduce five new departments, the sources said.

## Parties can hold rallies at any open space, not on streets: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said here yesterday that the political parties, from now on, could hold public meetings at any playground or open space other than on roads and streets, reports BSS.

She was exchanging views with the leaders of Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD-Khalequzzaman) as part of her discussion session with political parties at her office in the afternoon.

During the session they exchanged views on different issues including political, social and economic affairs of the country.

The Prime Minister said that she had given a standing order to arrest anybody, who ever he might be to be found to destabilise social order or create terrorism in society.

fore fixing seven venues in the capital for public meetings the Dhaka City Corporation convened all-party meetings but the BNP did not turn up.

While discussing various issues the Prime Minister said that a buffer stock of fertiliser had been built up to keep its price stable, stop smuggling and provide it to the farmers timely at fair price.

The Prime Minister further said that because of the far-sightedness and timely measures of the government there was no famine in the country for the last 15 months.

The BSD leaders appreciated the government for designating seven places for holding public meetings.

Led by party convenor Khalequzzaman the BSD delegation included, among others,

See Page 12 Col 1

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See Page 12 Col 1

## 8 Anti-Corruption Bureau officials suspended

By Staff Correspondent

Eight officials of the Bureau of Anti-Corruption were suspended yesterday because of alleged irregularities in their appointments, according to official sources.

Seven of them are of the rank of Deputy Director (DD) and one is district Anti-Corruption Officer. Of the DDs, five were based in Dhaka one in Chittagong and one in Comilla the district level officer was in Moulvibazar.

The Bureau which is under the Prime Minister's office initiated the action following an enquiry into the alleged irregularities.

## Pay Commission award breach of AL's election pledge: BNP

By Staff Correspondent

BNP has termed the new Pay Commission award for public servants "another document of breach of election pledge" by the Awami League government.

"With the implementation of the Pay Commission award, majority of the government employees, belonging to class-III and class-IV in particular, will have little rise in their salaries. The pay rise is not at all consistent with the inflation, contrary to government claims," BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan MP said in a press statement yesterday.

Mannan Bhuiyan asserted that the rise in salaries won't cope with the essential cost.

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## Clash at Mongla Port leaves 25 injured

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Oct 8: The situation at Mongla Port deteriorated today after clashes left at least 25 dock workers and two security guards injured in the last 48 hours.

Loading and unloading of ships remained suspended as the dock workers continued their strike demanding booking for casual workers. The strike will continue, said a leader of Dock Workers-Management Board.

At least 13 foreign ships are awaiting unloading, sources said.

The first clash took place on Tuesday noon when the Traffic Division of the Port Authority made an attempt to send a container to Khulna despite strong resistance by the striking dock workers.

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## Biman flights in Dhaka-Ctg route inadequate

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Oct 8: Biman's flights between Chittagong and Dhaka have decreased over the past few months although the number of passengers increased during the period.

Biman officials here said that shortage of aircraft forced reduction of flights in the route.

Now, only three flights a day are scheduled from the port city against a demand for more than four flights, officials said.

Two F-28 and one ATP aircraft are in operation in the route. If any of the three aircraft is grounded for any reason, the number of flights reduced further, they added.

Business people particularly foreign buyers and investors of Chittagong Export Processing Zone are worst affected.

Flights before 8 am and in the evening period are very convenient for business people who shuttle between Chittagong and Dhaka on business purpose. But there has been no such flight in the past few months.

Very often, many passengers

See Page 12 Col 6

## Bodies of eight missing fishermen recovered

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Oct 8: Eight decomposed bodies of missing fishermen were recovered by the owner of the missing fishing boat from the sea beach and Dhalchar of Bhola district during the last three days.

Of them, three bodies were recovered and identified by their relatives as Abdul Haq, 24, Mahafuz, 23 and Abdur Rahman, 31. They hailed from Telekhali under Bhandaria thana of Pirojpur district.

According to Panchhat Fisherman Co-operative Association, 38 fishermen were missing from three fishing trawlers and are feared dead.

Five bodies were recovered from Dhalchar were identified by the owner of the fishing trawler, Alam Mirza, as Yusuf, 30, Forkhan 32, Ahmad Gharani, 35, Arshed Ali, 50, and Shah Alam of Bakulbaria village under Galachipa thana of Patuakhali.



Despite repeated notices by the Dhaka City Corporation, various political parties have not yet dismantled their offices on pavements of different city roads. Two such structures — one of the ruling party at Phulbaria (Right) and the other of Opposition BNP's youth front at Kaptan Bazar Market Complex — are seen in the pictures.

— Star photo by Ansur Rahman

## PW-21 at Bangabandhu murder trial Maj Rashid ordered troops to get ready for emergency duty

Major Khandker Abdur Rashid, a few hours before the August 15, 1971, killing, ordered his troops to get ready with arms and ammunition for "special emergency duty."

Rashid, who was then the Commanding Officer of Two Field Artillery Regiment, inspecting the arms of his troops, also ordered them to take necessary ammunition, said Lance Naik (ret'd) Abdul Khaleque, the 21st prosecution witness in the Bangabandhu Murder Case, reports UNB.

Making his deposition before the court yesterday, Khaleque, 44, said CO Major Rashid along with Major Muhiuddin, Capt Bazul Huda and

some other "unknown" army officers came to them at about 2 am and passed the order.

He said the troops took ammunition from a truck when the Battery Havildar Major, probably named Kalam, divided them into a few sections and ordered each section to get into trucks which brought them to Road-32 at Dhanmondi at about 4 to 4:30 am.

The witness, who was a soldier of Papa Battery of 2-Field Artillery Regiment, said that on August 14, 1975 they had a programme of night training and the troops after having their dinner fell in at MT Garage.

By the order of the Battery Havildar Major, he said, they

took arms without ammunition and later went to New Airport in a road march probably under the command of Second Lieutenant Hasan.

At about 9 pm, he said, they reached the New Airport and took rest for some time. Capt Mostafa and 2nd Lt Hasan then briefed them on the night training and later took them to the southern end of the runway.

"As we were dozing on the runway Major Rashid, Major Muhiuddin, Capt Bazul Huda and some other unknown army officers came there when the CO informed them of the special emergency duty and passed the order."

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## India, Pakistan expel each other's visa officer

NEW DELHI, Oct 8: India and Pakistan have expelled each other's visa officers accusing them of spying, an official said today, reports AP.

Indian Foreign Ministry spokesman Raghav Bal Maheshkar said Pakistan's diplomat in New Delhi, Murad Baluch, was ordered on Monday to leave, hours after Islamabad expelled an Indian visa officer.

Madheskar described as a "total fabrication" Pakistan's charge that Indian officer Surjit Chaudhury had indulged in "activity incompatible with diplomatic status" Islamabad did not officially react to be in Indian action.

Six weeks ago, both nations expelled two staff members of their embassies.

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## Pak cricketers make history

RAWALPINDI, Oct 8: Pakistan's lower order, led by century-making debutant Azhar Mahmood, were in record-breaking form as the home side scored 456 in their first innings on the third day of the first Test against South Africa today, reports Reuters.

Pakistan had been 231 for eight but numbers 8, 10 and 11 scored 128, 45 and 59 respectively.

Mahmood, resuming on 72, hit 128 not out to join fellow debutant Ali Naqvi (115) in the record books. It was first time in the 121-year-old history of Test cricket that two debutants have scored centuries for the same team in an innings.

Mahmood also became the fifth batsman in history to have scored a century on his debut while batting at number eight or below.

The 22-year-old local boy, together with last man Mushtaq

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## Queen Elizabeth's call to end Indo-Pak hostility

ISLAMABAD, Oct 8: Queen Elizabeth today urged reconciliation between India and Pakistan, but Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said an end to their 50 years of hostility hinged on a solution to the dispute over Kashmir, reports AFP.

In a speech to a special sitting of the two houses of the Pakistan parliament, the British monarch said Pakistan and India have a "leading role" to play in realising South Asia's "full potential."

The Queen, who arrived on Tuesday for a six-day state visit to mark Pakistan's 50th year of independence, will also go to India celebrating its Golden Jubilee after the partition of the sub-continent in 1947.

The Queen did not refer specifically to the Kashmir dispute, a malignant tumour in

Indo-Pakistan relations, but welcomed recently opened bilateral talks urging them to settle "historic" disagreements.

"It is surely right, on this 50th anniversary of the independence of both countries, to take stock and renew efforts to end historic disagreements," she told a packed house attended by over 200 MPs.

"We all know, from experience, that animosity retards development... that development requires trust... that lack of trust closes off opportunities," the 71-year-old monarch said.

"There are few areas of the world where development is so acutely needed as in this sub-continent."

"It brings the friends of both countries only pleasure to see the commitment both have

See Page 12 Col 7

## Kibria assures donors of implementing reforms

Finance Minister Shah AM Kibria has reaffirmed the government's commitment towards implementation of the reforms, reports UNB.

In a meeting with the donors representatives in the city yesterday, he apprised them of various reform measures taken up by the government in different sectors for speedy economic development of the country.

The Finance Minister also highlighted the salient features of upward trends in the economic growth as part of government intervention to bring back discipline in the economic and financial sectors.

The donors discussed at length on different aspects of the ongoing reform agenda and with regard to inter-related issues as provision of credit to the private sector and speedy implementation of aided projects.

They also discussed on maintaining quality in public

expenditure and devising ways and means of more effective development co-operation, said an official handout.

Exchanging views on various aspects of the economy, Kibria referred to the different economic indicators and maintained that these indicators reflected the economy as being good, sound and stable.

In this regard, he referred to the rate of inflation, the increasing trend in export growth, the rise of remittances, the steady level of foreign exchange reserves, and the trend of increase in revenue collection, in spite of initial shortfalls.

He, however, maintained that efforts would be further intensified to increase the level of reserves.

The minister informed the donors about the concerted efforts of the government to speed up the privatisation process.

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Bhola is only accessible by waterways from outside. Bus services are available within the island. The picture taken in Shaheer Hat river near Tungbaria on October 2 shows a bus being transported to Bhola from Barisal in a makeshift 'ferry', joining two country boats.

— Photo by Morshed Ali Khan

# Govt's neglect hampering growth of pvt sector tourism industry

By Naimul Haq

Growth of private sector tourism industry, offering to operate complete package tours, is virtually nil. No progress has been made towards achievement of targets of the latest plans in this sector.

Only a handful of private tour companies are operating. "It is very sad that the country could not see growth of private tour operators due to government's neglect of the sector," alleged the owner of a private tour operator. Despite bright prospects of private sector tourism, the authorities con-

cerned failed to take proper steps for its development, said an entrepreneur working in this field for over 10 years.

A National Tourism Policy was prepared in 1992 to give a boost to the industry. "None of the recommendations in the policy has so far been properly implemented," claimed the entrepreneur.

Absence of a coordinated policy and sufficient allocation of funds stood in the way of development of private sector tourism. According to a study, it has not been possible to attract

domestic as well as foreign investments in private sector tourism.

The reason, many interested entrepreneurs say, is lack of initiative from the government.

In certain cases, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) refused to take private package tour developers into cognizance when they asked for suggestions.

Showing a documentary evidence to this correspondent, an entrepreneur said, "The attitude is completely negative."

An executive of the Tourism

Developers Association of Bangladesh (TDAB) said, "The previous governments did not fulfil any of their commitments to develop the sector."

In 1989, a French hotel resort chain — Club 5 — had sent a team to Bangladesh to explore prospects of developing tourism. They went back with no follow-up steps.

A disappointed private tourism developer, operating for over seven years, said, "How can one start something when the door is shut? Whatever we have set up, is without any sup-

port from the authorities concerned."

It may be mentioned here that places like Mahasthangarh, Madhabkunda, Madhabpur Lake, Sylhet tea gardens, Temple of Kantaji, Hiron point, off-shore islands in Cox's Bazar, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Mongla Port areas, Paharpur and the Sundarbans are some of the many attractive tourist spots in the country.

According to BPC statistics, the number of tourists is increasing every year. Last year, over 1,60,000 tourists arrived

followed by 1,56,231 in 1995 and little over 1,40,122 in 1994.

According to Bangladesh Bank sources, foreign exchange earned from tourism sector in the last one decade from 1986 stood at Tk 57913.21 million.

BPC is the only authorised government body to conduct all activities concerning tourism in the country, maintaining international standard, claimed a high official of BPC.

When contacted he said, "We have created an atmosphere for private investors to develop a

See Page 12 Col 8