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Draft organogram of regional council sent to PM's sectt

RANGAMATI, Mar 23: A proposed organogram of the Hill Regional Council (HRC) has reportedly been sent to the Special Affairs Division at the Prime Minister's Secretariat, reports BSS.

The organogram proposes a set-up of 124 officials in the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board for executing the development programmes of HRC.

Officials said the three departments — law and coordination, finance and administration, and development — will be headed by chief executive officers and a director executive officer from each department, will assist them.

There are provisions for See Page 12 Col 3

Cabinet approves draft bill on Bangabandhu Agri Varsity Act

The cabinet yesterday approved the draft Bill on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agriculture University Act, 1998, reports UNB.

The approval was given at the cabinet meeting held in the cabinet room in Sangsad Bhabna with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

The cabinet also endorsed the proposal on bilateral capital investment, expansion and preservation agreement between Bangladesh and Poland.

Interim report on Zia Murder Case submitted

CHITTAGONG, Mar 23: Police submitted an interim report on the President Ziaur Rahman Murder Case at the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court here today, reports UNB.

Submitting the report, ASP of CID Abdul Kader Khan said confessional statements of four police officers and five constables, who were present at the Circuit House 18 years ago, were taken.

President Ziaur Rahman was killed on May 30, 1981 by a group of army personnel at the local Circuit House.

Later, 13 army officers were hanged by a special martial law court on charge of mutiny, but there was no progress about the murder case in the last 18 years.

The CID official, in his report, said the post-mortem report of the deceased was not found.

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate fixed the next date of hearing of the case on May 19 and ordered the then head of the Forensic Department of Chittagong Medical College Hospital to submit the post-mortem report.

Admission test to be held as per new rules: BUET VC

The admission test of all the departments of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) scheduled for March 28 will be held as per new admission rules, reports BSS.

Prof Iqbal Mahmud, Vice-chancellor of BUET, said this at a press conference in the city yesterday.

He said the admission rules have been formulated by the Academic Council like previous years as per the BUET Ordinance after the publication of the HSC results.

In the previous two sessions, See Page 12 Col 2

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The city experienced the season's first nor'wester accompanied by rain yesterday morning. — Star photo

Bill passed in Jatiya Sangsad BNP walks out over renaming of IPGMR

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday passed a bill upgrading the Institute of Post Graduate Medicine Research (IPGMR) to a university and renaming it as Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Medical University amid a walkout by BNP legislators.

Most of the BNP lawmakers supported the government step to upgrade the IPGMR, but objected to the idea of renaming it after Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

They observed that the government was busy naming things after Sheikh Mujibur Rahman when the people were affected severely by the deteriorating law and order, price hike of essentials and mismanagement in the medicare system.

Terminating the move and act of over-enthusiastic sycophants, some BNP lawmakers suggested that the government should not go for changing the names of old institutions. "The government should set-up new institutions to name after their leaders."

A Jatiya Party MP criticised the bill saying that it kept no provision for a Senate. "With no Senate, subsequent governments would always be able to give appointment of vice-chancellor on the basis of political consideration."

Health and Family Planning Minister Salahuddin Yusuf however argued that the upgrade was aimed at meeting the long standing demand of physicians as well as the academicians in medical science. "With the upgradation of the IPGMR to a university, doctors

Khaleda opens Independence Day programme AL symbol of woes: BNP

The BNP leaders yesterday flayed the government for its alleged failure to contain soaring prices, lawlessness and protect the sanctity of mothers, reports UNB.

Recalling the past, the opposition leaders dubbed the ruling party, Awami League, as the symbol of woes to the people, and called for a vigorous movement to dislodge it from power for the sake of the nation.

They were speaking at a meeting yesterday evening on the eve of the Independence Day, being celebrated across the country on March 26. The meeting was held at the Diploma Engineering Institute in the city.

Awami League is the symbol of woes to the people, said Prof Chowdhury, and called for united movement against the government for protecting the nation and dignity of mothers.

Prof Chowdhury was also critical of the government move for raising the price of gas and electricity. He warned that further rise in gas and power rates will leave a devastating effect on the productivity and cripple the economy.

Turning to the war of independence, the BNP leader said the independence was proclaimed by Ziaur Rahman who had mobilised the forces and the masses as well to take part in the liberation war.

Before the war began, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman surrendered to the Pakistan Army leaving the entire nation in a critical situation, he added.

Former Finance Minister Saifur Rahman accused the government of destroying the capital market, a foundation for private investment, within 18 months of its misrule. The capital market was strengthened with much endeavour during the last 21 years.

Mobilisation of funds for construction of major part of the Jamuna Bridge was done during the BNP regime, he added.

Turning to the international relation, he said, "We want to keep friendly relation with all

Stampede kills garments worker

Fire-related incident

By Staff Correspondent

A female garments worker was killed and at least 30 others were injured in a fire-related stampede in a garments factory in Kalabagan area under Dhanmondi thana in the city yesterday morning.

The stampede followed a fire in tailoring shop on the first floor of a seven-storey building that also houses the garments factory. The fire originated from an over-heated iron.

Police and hospital sources identified the dead as Asia Begum, 26, wife of Taiab Ali. Asia succumbed to injuries at Suhrawardy Hospital.

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One of the garments workers injured in a fire-related stampede being comforted by a fellow worker at the DMCH yesterday. — Star photo

Naidu quits UF, joins hands with BJP

NEW DELHI, Mar 23: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's chances of winning a confidence vote later this week brightened as his right-wing Hindu nationalist party today aligned with a powerful regional group and the opposition United Front faced desertions, reports AP.

In a tactical move, the Bharatiya Janata Party decided to support the candidate of Telugu Desam Party for the post of Speaker to be contested tomorrow. This was a departure from the past as the speaker always represented the governing party.

With 12 lawmakers, the TDP, which is still part of United Front, can tilt the scale either way in Parliament where the governing coalition and the opposition are almost evenly placed. TDP leaders have said they will abstain in the vote of

Congress hope buried as TDP man to become Speaker

confidence Vajpayee is scheduled to seek Friday.

The BJP and TDP came together at a time when Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was facing problems keeping his flock together. Many of the 19 political parties supporting the BJP want more posts in the Cabinet or better Cabinet jobs in exchange for their backing.

The BJP got a boost when Chandrababu Naidu, the TDP leader resigned as chairman of the United Front today, saying he was insulted by the other members who met without his permission over the weekend to hold a candidate for the post of speaker of the legislature.

Naidu then surprised the Front and the Congress Party — which had planned to put up a common candidate for the speaker's job — by getting one of his lawmakers, GMC Balaoglu, to contest for the post.

The BJP immediately announced support for Balaoglu and rejected the Congress move to have its nominee as the next speaker.

"To accept the Congress nominee as the consensus candidate would have conveyed the feeling of weakness of the (governing) combine and that we do not have a majority," Press Trust of India news

Nor'westers kill 7 in 3 districts

At least seven people were killed and more than 100 injured as nor'westers swept parts of the country early yesterday morning, reports UNB.

Four deaths were reported from Chuadanga, two from Rajbari and one from Tangail.

The nor'westers accompanied by thunderstorm and moderate rains damaged several hundred kutcha houses, uprooted trees and damaged standing crops.

In Chuadanga town, four people died on the spot when a tree fell on them at Bhemrul. The victims were identified as Moqbul Hossain, 35, of Haqpara, Moslem, 30, of Farmpara, Asadul, 22, of Kedarganj and Rasul, 30, of Hatkaluganj.

Residents said about 500 thatched houses were either blown away or razed to the ground by the storm that lasted about half an hour.

A report from Rajbari said, Mohammad Ibrahim, 35, and his minor son Aku, 3, of Raghunathpur village died when they were struck by thunderbolt in the courtyard of his house at 7 am.

Aklima, wife of Ibrahim, survived the thunderbolt, but was severely injured.

About 200 kutcha houses collapsed during the storm.

Report from Tangail said: A severe storm lashed the town and its adjoining areas killing Jonab Ali, 65, of Kochua bazar under Sakhipur thana. Jonab Ali died when he came in contact with a live electric wire, snapped by the storm.

More than 10 people including two women of Sadar and Kalihati thanas were injured either by fallen trees or from house collapse. A woman whose

No plan to export gas: Nooruddin

The government has no plan to export gas, reports UNB.

"We don't have any such plan. We never even discussed such proposals," Energy Minister Nooruddin Khan said yesterday denying a press report.

Talking to UNB in his chamber, the minister said that gas production in the country is far behind its demand.

"How can we think of exporting gas when we can not still meet the domestic requirement?"

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Report on Second Round Block Bidding finalised

Petrobangla has finalised a report on the Second Round Block Bidding recommending suspension of negotiation for blocks 9 and 11, sources said.

The report will be placed at a meeting of the high-powered Investment Committee this evening.

It also suggested that the government may finalise negotiations with other companies in other blocks.

Earlier, the government

8 feared drowned as launch capsizes in Barguna

From Our Correspondent

BARGUNA, Mar 23: At least eight persons are feared drowned as a launch with about 50 people on board, capsized during a nor'wester here this morning.

The launch, ML Taruner Abhijan, capsized in Jayalbhanga area in the mouth of the river Payara at around 10 am today.

The launch which was on its way from Patuakhali to Patharghata, could not be salvaged till filing this report at around 9:30 pm today.

When contacted, Additional District Commissioner Mohammad Shafiqul Mia could not give any further details of the incident today.

8 including 5 of a family killed in road accident

MANIKGANJ, Mar 23: At least eight people, including five of a family, were killed when a microbus in which they were travelling collided with a truck at Golora on Dhaka-Aricha highway yesterday morning, reports UNB.

Police and witnesses said all the eight were burnt alive as the microbus caught fire immediately after it was hit by the truck coming from the opposite direction at Golora, three kilometres from Manikganj bus stand at around 11:30 am.

Five of the dead were identified as Jasim, his three sisters — Sultana, Maleka and Chhabi — and their mother Dulari Begum. Two others are Mamtaz, 30, and microbus driver Babu. One could not be identified.

The victims were all residents of Gandaria in Dhaka city and going to attend a wedding ceremony at Pukhuria village in Gheor thana.

Only one passenger, Babul, survived the accident. He was first admitted to Manikganj General Hospital and later shifted to Dhaka in a critical condition.

All the bodies were kept at the Manikganj General Hospital for autopsy.

A case has been filed with Sauria police in this connection.

Businessman murdered in Uttara

By Staff Correspondent

A middle-aged businessman was found dead beside a ditch at Kawla under Uttara thana in the city yesterday afternoon.

Police identified the dead as Mohiuddin Ahmed Moud, 50, a resident of Indira Road in city's Tejgaon area.

Uttara police recovered the body from near the ditch near the Civil Aviation staff quarters in Ambagan area at about 2:30 pm.

There was a deep cut mark in his throat and several stab marks in his abdomen and other parts of the body. The real motive behind the killing could not be known immediately.

Mohiuddin's wife Maleka Parvin told police that her husband did not return home since he left for Motijheel at about 8 am Sunday. Mohiuddin last contacted his wife by telephone at about 1 pm that day.

Mohiuddin told his wife that he was going to Motijheel to collect money from a borrower.

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Gas price may increase by 60pc in 2 phases

A proposal for 60 per cent gas price hike in two phases is awaiting approval of the Cabinet, reports UNB.

Energy Minister Nooruddin Khan admitted that a proposal for gas price hike is awaiting consideration by the Cabinet.

"The increase will be effective by the beginning of the next fiscal year," he said.

The ministry has suggested an increase of 31 per cent in the first phase with effect from the next month.

The minister justified his proposal, saying it has become inevitable because of increase in gas price in the international market.

Citing an example he said the price of per thousand CFT gas is around Tk 86 in Singapore, while in Bangladesh it is only Tk 54.

The ministry has proposed an increase of 31 per cent effective from April and another 29 per cent effective from October next.

"If the price is not increased immediately, the country would face tremendous loss when it starts buying gas of Sangu field from Cairn," said an official.

According to the contact, Cairn owns 30 per cent of gas to be produced from Sangu field. The government is committed to buy the gas supplied by Cairn at international price.

"Buying at international rate and selling at domestic price will cause a tremendous

Police forced me to make confessional statement, says Obayedul Matbar

Obayedul Matbar, the accused in the rape of the minor girl inside the CMM's court building, yesterday told the Judicial Committee that police had compelled him to make the confessional statement before the magistrate, reports UNB.

Obayed was brought before the two-member judicial committee comprising Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Habibur Rahman and Metropolitan Magistrate Shahidul Islam.

In course of talks, Obayed

Rape at court bldg Medical board may examine victim today

By Staff Correspondent

A medical board is likely to examine the six-year-old girl who was raped inside the CMM's court building on March 10.

The four-member board formed at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital earlier has asked the CID to bring the victim, Maria (not her real name), before the board today, CID sources said.

Maria was now at the Razarbagh police hospital under CID custody. She was discharged from the CMH after treatment few days ago.

Meanwhile, investigators yesterday questioned Maria and her friend, the lone witness, who is also now under CID custody.

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