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Banking Division abolished, energy ministry divided

The President has abolished the Banking Division of the Ministry of Finance through further amending the distribution of responsibilities of different ministries, an official handout said yesterday, reports BSS.

The President has also divided the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources under heads "Power Division" and "Energy and Mineral Resources Division," the handout added.

Cabinet may okay 3 bills on hill councils today

The weekly cabinet meeting today is likely to give final approval to three draft bills accommodating certain contents of the recently signed CHT peace accord.

The draft bills seek, among other things, strengthening of three hill councils in Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban districts in the light of the CHT accord.

JMBA draft ordn approved

The amended Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority (JMBA) draft ordinance was approved by the authority at a meeting yesterday, reports BSS.

Presided over by Communications Minister Anwar Hossain, the meeting also brought several amendments to the proposals adopted by the steering committee, which was formed for the inauguration of "Bangabandhu Bridge."

Some medicines banned

The government has temporarily cancelled the registration of some medicines and imposed ban on the production and marketing of these drugs, reports UNB.

The ban was imposed following a cautionary note issued by the World Health Organisation in this regard, said an official handout yesterday.

Aminul Islam new HC to Canada

Mohammad Aminul Islam, Secretary (OSD) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has been made High Commissioner to Canada, said an official announcement yesterday, reports UNB.

Aminul Islam, a career diplomat, served in various capacities in Bangladesh missions abroad, including Kuala Lumpur, New Delhi, Bonn, Tokyo, Calcutta and Ottawa.

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Noor Uddin removed as Energy Minister



Noor Uddin Khan

By Staff Correspondent

Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Lt Gen (ret'd) M Noor Uddin Khan was stripped of his portfolio yesterday afternoon.

The announcement of his removal from the energy ministry came through the official news agency BSS, quoting a handout, at 2 pm. It said that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina made Lt Gen (ret'd) Noor Uddin Khan a minister without portfolio but gave no details.

The replacement for Noor Uddin Khan was not announced till the filing of this report at 10 pm. However, the Cabinet Secretary told The Daily Star that the Prime Minister herself would take care of the vital portfolio.

Signs that the Prime Minister had taken the deteriorating

17 more children rescued in Bangalore



Seventeen Bangladeshi children await deportation at a railway station in Bangalore, India, on Saturday. — AP/UNB photo

By Nazmul Ashraf

Another group of 17 Bangladeshi children, rescued in India while being trafficked to the Gulf states to be used as camel jockeys, are expected to be sent back home in a couple of days, an official of the Bangladesh mission in Calcutta told The Daily Star over telephone, last night.

The children, along with 15 adults who posed as their parents, were rescued from traffickers by police in Bangalore recently, the official said seeking anonymity.

The fresh team of 17 children and their fake parents are likely to reach Calcutta from Bangalore tomorrow (Monday) or the day after and reach Dhaka in another two days," he said.

We're taking adequate measures for their protection and safe return home... They're coming here by train...," he said adding that the mode of their journey from Calcutta to Dhaka

Shaheed Minar incident DU to issue showcause on 6 JCD leaders

The Dhaka University syndicate has decided to serve showcause notices on six leaders of BNP-backed Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) for their alleged involvement in the untoward incident at the Central Shaheed Minar on February 21, reports UNB.

They are: Habib-un-Nabi Sohel, Monzor Elahi, Monir Hossain, Selimuzzaman, Bashir Ahmed Khan and Amzad Hossain Shshir.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the syndicate yesterday with Vice-Chancellor Prof A K Azad Chowdhury in the chair.

The syndicate took the decision in line with the report of the probe committee, which submitted its report to the authorities blaming the JCD leaders for desecrating the Shaheed Minar.

Armed Forces Divn to monitor power situation from PMO

A high level meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair yesterday took a number of important decisions to streamline the country's power supply system, reports BSS.

Briefing newsmen after the meeting, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr S A Samad and Press Secretary to the Prime Minister Jawadul Karim said that the decisions included establishment of strong inter-agency coordination, proper load management, snapping illegal power connections, reducing frequent loadshedding and generation of additional quantity of electricity.

Decisions were also taken to stop systems loss and redouble efforts for maintenance of power plants and their proper

Eid-ul-Azha on April 8

The holy Eid-ul-Azha will be observed throughout the country on April 8, reports UNB.

The National Moon Sighting Committee announced this as the moon of the month of Jilhajj was sighted yesterday.

The announcement came following a meeting of the committee which reviewed reports from various parts of the country.

Vice Chairman of the committee and secretary to the Ministry of Religious Affairs M Ismail Hossain presided over the meeting at Islamic Foundation yesterday evening, said a press release.

Ombudsman soon to ensure accountability

By Staff Correspondent

The government will appoint an Ombudsman to ensure the accountability of the executive wing of the state towards the people in general and to remedy injustice sustained by individuals in particular.

This was disclosed by Suranjit Sengupta, parliamentary affairs adviser to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. He was addressing a conference titled "Towards Establishment of the Office of Ombudsman in Bangladesh" in the city yesterday afternoon.

On behalf of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, I am assuring the audience that the government will appoint an Ombudsman," Sengupta said. He, however, told the gathering that the civil society should propagate the need of an Ombudsman among the people.

Jointly organised by three local NGOs, the conference was also addressed by Attorney General Barrister K S Nabi, Awami League MP Akhtaruzzaman and BNP legislator Khalequzzaman Chowdhury. Justice K M Sobhan chaired the conference, while Dr Borhan Uddin Khan made an audio-visual presentation on the subject. He discussed in details about the origin of the concept of Ombudsman, its objectives as well as its effectiveness in establishing justice in the society.

The concept of the Ombudsman was adopted in the country's Constitution in 1972, while a law was enacted to meet the constitutional obligation in 1980. But the office of the Ombudsman is yet to be established in the country.

According to the law, the Ombudsman will enjoy the

Owners of 2 travel agencies held on charge of cheating 31 Hajj pilgrims

By Staff Correspondent

The Detective Branch of police arrested the owners of two travel agencies on charges of cheating 31 Hajj pilgrims from different areas in the city Saturday night.

Police identified the arrested persons as Kazi Shahadat Hossain, owner of a travel agency in Khulna, and Belayet Hossain, owner of another travel agency in the city.

They were arrested for misappropriating about Tk 16 lakh of the 31 Hajj pilgrims from Khulna, police said.

Shahadat took the said amount from the intending pilgrims as plane fair and other expenses. Shahadat and Belayet



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited ailing Shawkat Osman, a renowned litterateur, at the CMH in the city yesterday. — PID photo

Rape: Statement of lone witness recorded

By Staff Correspondent

The lone witness, a minor boy, in the rape case of the six-year girl at CMM court building, recorded a statement before a metropolitan magistrate yesterday.

CID investigators produced the boy, a friend of the victim, Maria (not her real name), before the magistrate at about 2pm. It took about half an hour to record the statement, police source said.

Maria was raped allegedly by a young man at a place near the police control room on the first floor of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court at about 3 pm on March 10.

Obayedul Matbar, 25, accused in the rape, has already recorded a confessional statement in this regard.

Meanwhile, the CID hoped that they would receive the medical report of Maria from the Dhaka Medical College Hospital within a couple of days.

The investigators have so far interrogated about 40 people including the policemen of CMM's court barrack in connection with the rape. They are likely to question some more people in and around the court area.

Earlier last week, Maria and her father recorded separate statements before the magistrate.

Maria and her father were now at the Razarbagh police hospital while the little boy who recorded statement yesterday was under the CID custody.

Rivals beat up 2 BCL activists at DU: 17 held

By DU Correspondent

Two Chhatra League activists were beaten up, one severely, by a rival faction at Sir AF Rahman Hall of Dhaka University late Saturday night.

The victims were identified as Nasim and Sobhan. Seriously injured Nasim was admitted to the Orthopaedic Hospital while Sobhan was treated at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Nasim was seriously injured in the face, head and chest.

Police arrested 17 students from AF Rahman, Mohsin and Surya Sen halls of the university after the incident.

A case was filed yesterday in connection with the incident accusing 20 students. The arrested 17 students included ten accused in the case. They are

Oil, gas major areas Investment prospects bright: US team

By Staff Correspondent

The high-powered US trade delegation yesterday said there were bright prospects for US investment in the country, specially in the energy sector.

George Munoz, leader of the three-member delegation, speaking at a press conference at the American Club here, said they were happy at the government's attitude towards US investment in the country.

"We came here to make sure that everything is alright and on the right track."

He said that the government was welcoming private investment and that it removed many barriers which were obstructing foreign investment.

Munoz is the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) of US. Two other members of the delegation

Compulsory retirement of Biman official stayed

The High Court yesterday stayed the operation of compulsory retirement of an official of Bangladesh Biman, reports UNB.

The court comprising Justice A M Mahamudur Rahman and Justice Zakir Ahmed stayed the compulsory retirement of Md Yusuf Harun, General Manager, Cargo Terminal of Biman.

Yusuf Harun was placed under compulsory retirement on March 22 under the Public Servant (Retirement) Act 1974 and Bangladesh Biman Corporation Employees (Service) Regulations, 1979.

Advocate A F Hassan Arif moved the petition on behalf of Harun.

Results of second round block bidding may be delayed further

By Sharier Khan

However, officials denied Tullow's claim of LOI saying that the government did not issue any LOI to any bidder of the second round block bidding, including Tullow, regarding any block.

Tullow was offered Block 9 on October 22 last year and later Block 11 on the basis of its work programme. However, as negotiations for getting a big and financially capable partner had caused delay in the whole bidding process, the government is now thinking about putting these most sought-after blocks to fresh bidding or postponing the bidding process.

The results of the bidding process was originally scheduled to be announced on December 15. But now, because of indecision about blocks 9 and 11, it is not clear whether the government would be able to announce the results in the next couple of months.

Originally, blocks 9, 10 and 11 were not planned to be included in the second round block bidding which was floated on June 15 last year. These blocks, according to official documents of Petrobangla and the Energy Ministry, were supposed to be reserved for export.

'Suspend bidding to look into profitability of PSCs again'

By Staff Correspondent

Eminent geologists of the country have urged the government to suspend the Second Round Block Bidding process for selecting foreign companies to explore oil and gas in the country.

The geologists said that the government should first evaluate the existing Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs) with four foreign companies and in the light of the evaluation see, if the second round bidding can be as profitable as it is said.

Participating in a seminar at Jahangirnagar University on

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Quiz 2	16 April, '98	29 April, '98	29 April, '98	30 April, '98
Quiz 3	30 April, '98	13 May, '98	13 May, '98	14 May, '98
Quiz 4	14 May, '98	27 May, '98	27 May, '98	28 May, '98
Quiz 5	28 May, '98	10 June, '98	10 June, '98	11 June, '98
Quiz 6	11 June, '98	17 June, '98	17 June, '98	18 June, '98
Quiz 7	18 June, '98	24 June, '98	24 June, '98	25 June, '98
Quiz 8	25 June, '98	01 July, '98	01 July, '98	02 July, '98
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